



THE  
DAUGHTER OF HINDUSTHAN  
OR  
THE HINDU WOMAN OF INDIA

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## FOREWORD.

The East is less vocal and self-asserting than the West, and that is why it has been so much misunderstood. It has been described as gorgeous, but the characteristic of the East is to retire within itself, to escape the gaze of the curious. Hindu India has suffered in the estimation of the world because it would not take the trouble of making itself known to others.

The Hindu woman, as she really is, is least known to any one outside the Hindu society. Even many *modern* Hindus fail to understand adequately the ideal their sisters are trying to realise. For the better appreciation of the Hindu woman in her own land and abroad, the author has considered it his duty to write this book. But he ventures to say he has lent his support to nothing which any person, whether a Hindu or not, can take exception to. Many things do not appeal because they are not well understood. The author's main task has been to help to understand the Hindu woman rightly.

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# THE DAUGHTER OF HINDUSTHAN.

## CHAPTER I.

### *THE VICTIM OF POWER.*

Eternal fascination hovers round power. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, all are ardent votaries of power. Its magnetic charm is ceaselessly drawing the countless denizens of this planet.

The triumph of power is the measure of the weakness of man. The sight of the mighty power, breaking into the multitudinous things all around, makes a person sadly conscious of his frail existence. What weakness does he not find dwelling in him compared to the great sweep of power that is ever manifesting itself in myriads of majestic forms! Down he sinks, an ephemeral being, crushed under the sense of his weakness.

Who would then be surprised at the avidity with which man clutches power? With all the eagerness—aye, nervousness—of a weak nature he makes his bid for power. He puts his all on the stake. He runs after it till he turns giddy, but

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still does not give up the chase for what is life worth without power? The flush he reddens into with the first taste of power! He whirls with joys as he drinks out of the invigorating cup. Power thrills his weak frame with new life and he snatches the cup to fill it over and again. Every step he advances adds zest to his career.

None can deny the mighty force power stands as a symbol for. In his onward course in life none can deny the great accessory man possesses in power. The angel of love in his mission of beneficence, and the plunderer in his work of depredation alike feel the need of power. All want it, all glory in it, and none likes to part with it.

Nothing exists which has not its use but which in course of time does not stand abused. The power that should have made weak man great, with aspiration for ever increasing power which is all sunshine and glory, turns man into a tyrant instead. When man should have triumphed over power it is power that triumphs over man. Man has been more or less a tyrant ever since he has tasted of power and power is trying to retain its grip over man its rich prize.

Every man would like to lord over the rest, if he could failing which, he lords over as many as he can. If he fails to gain his desire singly,

he acts in concert with others, and shares the spoils with his associates. It took very little time for half the human creation, intoxicated with power, to combine for tyrannising over the remaining half. The first and foremost victim at the altar of power has been the woman. From the dawn of creation man has domineered over woman.

The story of woman is an unbroken record of shame for man. The sight of woman should make every man blush. If every man is what he has made himself, every woman is what man has made her. Her very thoughts run in the groove man has desired, to direct them into. Man has never stopped to contemplate his handiwork, the woman. He has never thought of comparing the picture of woman she might have been with the picture of what he has made of her. He has never cared to enquire how he has discharged the trust he took upon himself.

Yes, the trust was taken voluntarily. Before woman could make herself heard, before she could even think what was good for her, man rushed forward to take charge of her. The solicitude he has displayed for her welfare ! Conscious of his power and led by its greed, man proceeded, with the help of his sex, to make woman his eternal captive. Differences in political views have been

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and will be, differences in the religious thoughts of peoples have been and will be but difference never arose with regard to the subjugation of woman by man. From one end of the world to the other, without distinction of colour, creed, or civilisation, the male sex to a man combined to bring the woman down on her knees.

The eternal plea of sex, the weaker sex! *Astonishing expressions* coined by man! Is not woman weak on all admission? Look to the history of woman—every page of which, alas has been written by man—and does not one read in every line of it, that woman is a fragile being and stands in need of constant guidance? Does not one find the limit clearly marked out for woman, thus far should she go and no further? Countless abuses have been sheltered under the plea of her sex, oppression has been legitimatised under the guise of doing what man has give out to be proper for woman. Woman, the eternal baby is to ever remain in the swaddling clothes man has put her into. Man quotes chapter and verse he has written to perpetuate his tyranny over her. And woman—even man, in course of time—has come to believe all that has been chanted about her aim and position in life. The degradation is thus complete, the work of infamy

merrily goes on, and half of humanity, steeped in ignorance, continues to do the bidding of the remaining half, and is declared to be ever so happy.

How has woman taken the treatment meted out to her ? The mothers of the race have behaved just as every mother behaves in her home. Woman has treated man just as every mother would treat her naughty child. In return for all the indignities heaped upon her, woman has always forgiven man just as every mother forgives her naughty child and clasps it to her bosom again. With open arms woman has always extended her welcome to man, her betrayer.

If man would only reflect why woman has meekly submitted to the yoke he has forged for her. The smile may be seen stealing over his lips as he thinks, could weak woman resist the superiority of man ? Were not the world and its ways fashioned for man's express behoof ? Does not the sun shine, the wind blow, and the crops tender their yield, in order that man, the king of creation, may be made happy ? Could woman be better employed than in ministering to the comforts of man ? The stamp of weakness she bears proclaims the place in life that is hers.

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Weakness forsooth ! Woman, a weak creature ! Of all the slanders levelled against her, the greatest has been man's conception of the nature of woman. As the worshipper of muscles and sinews, the cult of physical power, it was inevitable man would blunder in his estimate of woman's character. The meaknes, the tenderness, and the endurance of woman have been, from the beginning, misconceived. Could man only imagine what would have been his fate if all the strength of womanhood had not been converted into the forms of meekness, tenderness, and endurance ? If the mothers of the race had been defiant, cruel, and impatient, where would have the sons stood ? In the characteristic manner of displaying her strength woman has bled in order that man, her child, may be resuscitated, she has silently wept in order that man her child, may not cease to smile she has fortified herself with endurance, so that there may not appear a ripple over the happiness of man her big child. Man, if you keep your eyes glued to the youth of woman pull them out of their sockets, for they fail to do their duty. The essence of womanhood lies in her motherhood. Over all her thoughts all her feelings, peeps out her motherhood which is woven into her existence. Man is the eternal

child of woman and she cannot but be forgiving and forbearing.

Has woman never felt all that has been denied her, all that could be hers ? Could the soul in her so long fail to perceive what natural rights she has been kept out of ? In her life of constant sacrifice, has she not had a glimpse of the higher life she could have led ? Every man could tell a story if he had the heart to do so. The wail reached me once. It has ever since vibrated in my heart. It did not come out of a soul that had been crushed under the load of misery she had to bear. All that love could give had been her share in life. All that a valorous man could clothe womanhood with had been her joy to receive. But still the soul felt the craving for a higher existence. She was descended from a stock, the hearts of all who sprang from it had swelled with joy at the thought of the Blissful. All that separated her from her kith and kin, who had delighted in the unceasing contemplation of the All-pervading, was the bare difference of sex. With beaming eyes and deep yearning in her soul, she poured out her heart and said she wished she were a man ! Poor child, what dreams she had seen, what visions had developed before her, in which she could not participate, because of her sex ! I felt pierced through



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my heart Through ages of degradation woman had come to nourish the thought that her sex was a bar to leading a higher life She must unsex herself, before she could claim admission into the region of bliss, which was hall marked for man alone

We hear the distant rattle of criticism which gathers in volume as it approaches The East mingles with the West, the North joins with the South, the whiteman clasps the hand of the black man in the bond of friendship all eager to raise their united voice against a traitor a man, who has dared traduce his sex.

We can see the Westerner jauntily strutting out, with sneer curling his lips and throwing the book at us, as he haughtily utters, "A Hindu should speak for a Hindu, whom alone he knows" Brave brother, command a little patience. When we say that your mother is our mother that we are as sensitive of the fair name of thy sister as we are of our own, we have said all that need be said. We know all that you are bursting with pride to narrate You glory in saying that you do not hold woman in bondage as they do in the East, that she is free like the air she breathes, that she is your real companion in life and presides over your hearth and home The fire-side would be cheerless without her the dinner would

pall when she is not at the table, the ride through the shady avenue would be robbed of all its joy if she is not by your side, and the dancing-hall would cease to exist if her steps do not glide through it. You have made her your partner even in the games you play, and success loses its charm if she does not put the laurel round your brow. And have we not heard of your chivalry for the sex? The bold knight in old days had the privilege of holding the sword to protect her. When danger threatens you seek the safety of woman first. Above all, and we pay our homage for it, you have made her your equal in life on account of the rule of monogamy you stand by.

Do these really sum up all the claims woman has upon you? Have you been able to persuade yourself that the soul in her desires to receive nothing more? It cannot for a moment be thought that you have carried conviction to your heart. In every case of dominating the weak and the ignorant, the better sense in man has never convinced him about the justness of his cause. In every fight of state against state, class against class, man against man, the powerful has always over-powered the weak. The victory proclaims the might of the power, but is never able to perpetuate a cause that is unjust. The triumph

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of the just cause takes place ultimately. All the while the better sense in man recoils before the accusation he brings against himself. He can achieve every thing else but cannot long masquerade as the just man. The voice of offended justice, at first inaudible makes itself heard so persistently that man cannot rest until the call is obeyed. In his dealings with woman the inner voice has never failed to harp on the wrongs he has committed. The penitent man has often rushed forward to demolish the false idol before which he has sacrificed womanhood, but with wavering feet he has as often come back, leaving the idol triumphant. He has then tried to make peace with himself by granting small concessions to woman for which he has claimed praises while woman has remained sunk deep in the mire.

Man has never analysed the character of the concessions he has made from time to time. Our brother in the West has scarcely made serious effort to realise the real nature of all that he takes pride in. *Has it ever struck him that, curiously enough* much of what he claims to have done to improve womanhood runs along the line of his gratification the enhancement of his pleasure? Like the doll the child adorns that it may play with it all the more cheerfully he has been all the time

trying to make woman attractive enough to draw the utmost pleasure out of her. He just makes room for her when she can help to sweeten his life, and keeps her out of the way when he no longer requires her. You may treat woman as you like, but you cannot flee from her. You have need of her as she has need of you. You may explain the origin of sin by making her the temptress who has seduced you from the path of innocence, but still you have need of her. Your lot has been linked inseparably with hers, and, wise man that you are, you proceed to make her as useful as you need, as enjoyable as you please. In the routine of life, you have arranged for yourself, you have set down the time when she can be most agreeable to you, and the woman knows it and prepares for the hour. She goes through her toilet, arranges her curls, looks herself in the glass to see that she is what you would like her to be, and hastens to your side just when you would want her. The smile with which you welcome her, your pet, the indispensable human pet! How you admire her and into what raptures you are thrown over her, your pet. Walking you would have your pet by your side, playing you must have her with you. You cannot think of parting with your pet so long as she delights you.

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You would do anything for your pet the dear delightful pet How you scowl when anything comes between you and your pet ! Your anger knows no bounds when there is danger of being deprived of her and out flashes your sword against the enemy What a valuable pet she is to you !

Man simply dotes upon the weakness of woman. Woman should remain ever weak that he may continue to take pride in being her protector The idea of a strong woman is paradoxical and appears amusing to him He will cease to like woman if he finds the spirit developing in her Woman should remain eternally weak to remain ever charming in the eyes of the valiant man. Wisdom in a woman ! The pet a wise pet ! It would be simply unsexing woman in man's eyes if she were to be wise as well as strong What sweet nonsense does not the dear pet utter and throw him into ecstasies ! The pet to talk wisdom ! The idea !

There is the pinch for man, or as the immortal poet would have said aye there's the rub Man cannot bear to make woman her equal His dream of womanhood would be gone as soon as she is set on a footing of equality with him. He cannot bear to have an eternal rival by his side Two cannot rule. Woman should therefore, go to the wall. Her conception of wisdom and strength

should remain confined to her admiration of the wisdom and strength displayed by man.

Man does not dare deny the charge that may be brought against him by woman. Language is exhausted in describing woman's envied position in life. Take away, for a moment, the trinkets man has decorated her with, the trifling knick-knacks in the midst of which he has placed her, remove woman, for a while from the scenes of frivolities she has been taught to look upon and prize as the cream of life, and then examine what is left of man's precious companion in life. Cease for a moment to consider woman as a being whose one object in life is how to make man happy, and gaze upon her as a soul which, like yours, has been travelling through this earth. Do you discover the marks of development in her which you desire in an ordinary man? The fountain of knowledge, from which it is at once the ambition and solace of man to drink, is it found glittering before the eyes of woman? What conception does she form of the sublime elements in existence which elevate life and raise it far above the routine of din and bustle? How does the faith stand with her? Does her soul peep into the realm of the hereafter, and does she, like man, prepare for the life that is to come? Does she struggle in life

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to bring herself in touch with the eternal source of bliss which all in a moment converts the dark alleys of life into glorious pathways and floods the soul with a light which never goes out? Standing on the common ground of humanity and vibrating with the same feelings let man say how he has shaped woman to qualify for the eternal life which is hers as well as his. Woman is not only the person whose company he seeks in his days of youthful dalliance, she is also the mother to whose knees he clings for the soft words of wisdom which he first lisps in life. With the image of his mother before him, let man confess how he has shaped the lives of the mothers of the race. Would man like any one of his neglected sons to show the intellect which goes to make the ordinary equipment of a woman? He frets and foams, thinks life has been thrown away if he comes across one of his fellowmen showing a fraction of the imperfections which go unnoticed in the case of his darling mother. But she is after all a woman. She may be his beloved sister with whom he has spent many a precious year of his life but she is only a woman. She may be his wife, who has shared his sorrows and trials and stifled her feelings lest he be deprived of the inspiration of her beaming countenance but she

is after all a woman. If ever man feels troubled with the qualms of conscience, he rushes into the first shop and purchases for her the latest design in headgear or the costliest gem his purse can afford, and feels satisfied that he has given ample proof of his devotion and sacrifice for her. If still her soul languishes, well, he cannot help it.

Man, who is out for enjoyment, has not considered the kind of delight woman, his companion in life, provides him with. It has not struck him that instead of a soul he could have linked with his own, he has attached only a handful of trinkets and a mass of linen which he has taught woman to admire. To what pit the conception of happiness has been dragged down! A just revenge has overtaken man for the sins he has committed. No soul has ever been able to harm another without harming itself. No one has yet been able to endanger the liberty of another without endangering his own. If man could only imagine the uplifting of the soul, the joys of existence, he has shut the door against, he would realise the loss he has suffered. Woman's loss has been man's loss. Woman's degradation has been man's degradation.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE REVOLT OF WOMAN*

The dire consequence is about to commence  
The revolt of woman is in sight. The banner  
of insurrection has already been hoisted in the  
West. The West has provided humanity with  
many sacred fields, where the battles for liberty  
have been fought and won. It is in the West  
the cry for liberty freedom and enfranchise  
ment has been raised by woman, and ere long the  
whole world would reverberate with its echo  
In the mighty upheaval that is taking place the  
pangs of a new birth for womanhood are visible

Abuse of power cannot continue long Thral  
dom cannot exist for all time Tyranny in many  
of its forms has just been rudely shaken. States  
have been thrown into the melting pot and the  
oppressed in society are raising their heads and  
trying to come to their own The same greed  
for power that has kept woman down has per  
meated all grades of life and carried its bane every  
where The abuses in some cases have assumed  
such proportions that the structures are about

to be crushed under their loads of sins. Starved labour has discovered its intellect and with developed arms has risen to strike. Vested interests, under the searchlight of analysis, are revealing the dark spots which mark all usurpation of power. The spirit of individuality is abroad. Against accidents of birth, influence, and social gradation, the naked individual has commenced to struggle with its sorrowful tale of oppression. The human society is again in a state of flux. Woman, the weakest and most injured of all, is also on the warpath. She is bent upon improving her lot without the help of man. Like the rest of the down-trodden, she is trying to help herself. The oppressed refuse to depend any longer upon the charity of those in power. The reign of self-help has begun.

What happens in all cases of revolt is happening also in the case of the revolt of woman. One deep sense of injury is obscuring the vision of woman, eager for redress. Cut off from the active sympathy of man, who would fain keep her in his grip as long as he can, she is unable to form an intelligent idea of what should satisfy her womanhood. She is unable to set up an ideal which would mould her life, though she is determined to act. In her exasperation she has decided to

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take the pattern of man for her copy. She imagines her object would be gained if she could only think, feel, and act, like man. The first fruits of imitation are shewing themselves. In a case of imitation, the vices come in for adoption first. Woman is just now busy in picking up the traits of character in man which it is more than time for him to shake off. She has begun to put the cigarette between her lips, elbow through the crowd with stick in hand, and assume the swagger of man which makes him such a bore in life. The day may not be far distant when the small hours of the morning will echo with peals of merriment, as the chorus is sung "What a jolly good fellow *she* is!"

All the items in her programme have so far been borrowed from man. Was all this effort to cast off your bondage, to awaken the soul in you, made only to make a *man* of yourself? Gentle sister, we can see what is passing through your mind, can feel the sore that is rankling in your heart. After goodness has been abused, meekness outraged, and obedience brutalised you consider it a shame to be a woman, so long that description is associated with all that once distinguished you. But, remember, my sister mere resentment is not reform. You should not, need

not, aspire to be a *man*, you have only to feel proud that you are a *woman*.<sup>1</sup> Though you should bear in mind that the soul is not distinguished by any sex, do not for a moment forget the distinction of sex that exists in this life. As you rise higher and higher, you will find that there is not much in a form of life, it is the manner in which life is lived and the end that is sought to be achieved, which are of importance. As you progress, you will find the forms falling off, one after another, until the soul shines in the effulgence of its own light. Sex, class, and creed, will be found to have been left far behind, as the soul, in its radiant course, travels towards eternity. But till that time arrives, the distinctions are there and have to be recognised. Life here has to be worked through the channel it has been made to flow, and no channel is a mean channel. No form of life is a mean form. Care has only to be taken that the essence, the soul, that the form covers, does not get cramped.

What is not there of immense value, highly potential, in woman which she should not long to develop, instead of pursuing the manlike type she is so eager to copy? She has only to be awakened to the consciousness of the power that resides in her, to realise how strong she really is,

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and at what distance ahead of man she has been travelling. We are all worshippers at the shrine of power but we have yet to learn what real power consists in. Man has so long run after the tinsel and is as far off from real power as when he first aspired to be powerful. The power, the very touch of which energises and elevates all who come under its spell, has not yet attracted the attention of man. Weak man, therefore, continues to be weak. He wonders why the possession of power, which he so much longs for, leaves him ever so weak. Prophets of real power have now and again arisen and carried the message from door to door, asking weak man to be powerful, but their call has gone unheeded. Christ laid down his life, Buddha renounced his kingdom, and Krishna has been singing ever so long and sweetly, for making men powerful and great, but still the message of the all powerful Love has not found response in the human heart. All this time the fight for love is delayed and the raising of the kingdom of love postponed. Love, the great power which would have held both the victor and the captive in one great bond of glory, making the world good and every one great and powerful, finds no following. It is not given to man to peer into the mystery of the creation. Every

thing happens best when it comes in time. The power of Love is perhaps reserved to be felt last, after the hollowness of power in every other shape has been exposed. But in one silent corner the flame has been burning. From one neglected place it has been silently radiating its warmth to human beings, so that the fire may be lit and the blaze spread, when humanity is prepared for it. In the woman's heart, in the mother's breast, Love has been silently welling up, ever since existence on earth commenced, and woman holds the privilege of being the future instructress of man in his attempt to gain real power and knowledge. After man has fought and killed to his heart's content, after he has gone weary seeking his interest, and has seen the pomp of physical power reduced to dust, careworn and battered, he would seek the refuge of Love, the seat of real power, the centre of abiding joy. Man would then feel that the real hunger of life consists in the desire to love and be loved, and the real ambition of life consists in the power to create good-will among men. He would then find Love drawing towards itself the entire creation which sprang out of its lap. He would then recognise Love as the mighty force which keeps the universe on its path. Man would then realise what womanhood has really

stood for Woman would then feel ashamed of her desire to unsex herself. She would then cease to crave for that form of life which can only drag her from the high pedestal she has been occupying. All training, all culture, should help to make the light in her soul shine with ever increasing brightness and release her from the thralldom of the senses which man has brought her under

## CHAPTER III.

### *THE IDEAL OF HINDUSTHAN.*

The thought of an ideal makes a man feel awe-stricken. It transports him all at once to a region, the entrance to which is, as it were, forbidden him, and he feels he treads the ground on sufferance. He approaches the presiding deity like a guilty soul with a heart ready for confession. He would fain not face the ordeal. A vague consciousness of his short-comings oppresses him. He feels he has missed many things in life. One single thought of what life might have been suddenly rushes past and makes him sad.

Man has always felt that he has missed the ideal in life, but all the same he never ceases to hold one before him. The ideal moulds his entire life. His regret is due not to the want of an ideal but to the apprehension that he has not held the true ideal before him.

Man constantly follows the ideal of his choice. In all that he does, his ideal leads him on. Even the most random life is true to its ideal.

Every nation is moving on the pivot of the ideal it has held up before it. The character of a nation

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reflects the character of its ideal. From every corner of the nation's life the ideal peeps out. In the food it eats, the dress it wears, in its virtues and vices, its art and religion, and in its hopes and fears, the ideal can be distinctly traced. The ideal either makes or mars the nation.

To understand a nation rightly its ideal has to be reached. To appreciate the womanhood of Hindusthan, it is necessary to know what the Hindu ideal of life has been. Like every limb of the Hindu society, her daughters are trying to work out the ideal dear to the heart of the Hindu.

From the time the distinction between the temporary and the permanent was first perceived by man, he has felt the influence of the spirit creeping over him. The gentle hand of the spirit has ever since beckoned man to embrace that which is ever lasting and to leave every fleeting thing behind. In the shape of the spirit the Everlasting has been calling man to gather by Its side and make the eternal life of the spirit his own.

In every human heart the voice makes itself heard when the time for it is ripe. It speaks when the round of delight in the fleeting joys of life attracts man no more. As the view of life is enlarged, and the conception of pleasure is raised, man begins to long for the joy that is not short

lived, which does not die with the setting sun. When man has got a foretaste of everlasting joy, the reign of the spirit has commenced.

The reign of the spirit is inevitable.' It does not come crushing everything before' it. Like the triumphant march of the victorious army, it does not extort submission by striking terror into the hearts of persons. It comes in response to the spontaneous yearning of the human heart to dwell in it for ever. When the seat in the human heart, the golden throne, is ready, the king, the spirit, comes and occupies it. Sooner or later, the heart of every man will be made ready to welcome the Eternal Spirit.

In the dawn of human life, the spirit manifested itself in Hindusthan. From the peaks of the Himalayas, clapped in eternal snow, an early yearning for the spirit went up and brought it upon the land. The Hindu was soon able to discern what joys he should seek in life. The light early gleamed upon him that the flesh could not be the end and aim of man. He had tasted the joys of the body but they failed to yield him the pleasures he had learnt to value. He had perceived the distinction between the temporary and the permanent sources of delight. He longed for the joys of existence, but he preferred to have

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those which would not at any time cease to delight him

A mass of ignorance prevails about the Hindu devotee or ascetic as he is commonly known. What skims on the surface and the ordinary eyes can make out has arrested the notice of the foreign observer but that which lies deep underneath and the eyes of the spirit can alone behold have eluded his grasp The Hindu devotee is the embodiment of the Hindu culture He does not leave home behind to go to the forest he hies to the forest to find his home there He does not shun the pleasures of existence for courting pain He prepares himself for participation in the joys that know no bound. He is a great connoisseur of pleasure, if you would so like to style him He devotes his life to find out the eternal source of delight. He is an out-and out pleasure seeker The flashing eyes and the sour lips which are associated with the Hindu hermit utterly fail to draw his real picture His beaming countenance proclaims the radiance of joy in which he reposes The object of his contemplation, his *Parmatman* his God, is overflowing with bliss is Bliss itself The eternal spirit is eternal Bliss Joy is not contraband for the Hindu devotee The ideal of his life is the attainment of eternal bliss

Religion in India did not grow apart from philosophy. One would scarcely be able to find out where the one ends and the other begins. In Hindu India, they appeared as the twin fruits of one and the same tree of culture. In one deep embrace religion and philosophy lay reposing in India. The idea is conveyed by saying that the Hindu religion is intensely philosophical. The latest development in philosophy was at once translated into the latest tenet of religion, and all hearts beat in unison with the latest product of the intellect. It was an extraordinary phenomenon in India that Belief did not stand divorced from Reason.

The Hindu was a born philosopher. The little sage nodded in every Hindu. The momentary could not quench his thirst. He should drink deep out of the fountain of the eternal spirit, if he should drink at all. The Everlasting beckoned him to Its side ever and anon. \*

The effect of this belief was at once reflected in the everyday life of the Hindu. Without leaving for the forest, he began to live the life of an anchorite. His one object in life became to out-distance the body and woo the spirit. The earth and its surroundings began to recede gently away from him. As the feasts of the soul began to con-



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stitute the delights of his life, the claims of the body began to fall into the background. Life on earth appeared to him like a halt at a wayside inn where the soul stopped for a very brief time on its journey towards its eternal abode.

The spiritual ideal became the ideal of his life. The entire life should be in tune with the call of the spirit. His institutions should breathe of it, to be worth anything in his eyes. The ideal of the spirit is the ideal of humbleness. Self-forgetfulness became the keynote of his existence. In all the walks of life he began to practise self-forgetfulness.

The spirit in man began to shine in its utmost glory but this view of life was soon to receive a rude set-back. Ere long it was found that the placidity of existence had been too much counted upon for the smooth progress of the ideal. The harmony of life in Hindusthan was threatened, and the ideal was in imminent danger of being swept away.

The ideal was threatened both from within and without. Revolt within the land and invasion from outside attacked the ideal. The former appeared in the shape of clash of ideals and the latter sounded in the din of arms. History, whatever history the Hindus possess, has recorded the

latter, but the former has gone unrecorded. Both, however, sprang out of the same cause. What brought about the clash of arms also helped to usher in the clash of ideals.

Hindusthan was to pay a heavy penalty for the precocity it had displayed. While life in the other parts of the world was still in its infancy and delighted in the first joys of the senses, the precocious Hindusthan, the prodigy Hindu nation, had withdrawn into the stage of contemplation. It had set its face against the ordinary activities of life at a time when these appear to be supreme and life draws the utmost pleasure out of them. But the senses could not be so summarily throttled. The claim of the body and its part in building up life could not be so utterly ignored.

The blend of harmony is a deep study for the student of humanity. That the so-called heterogeneous elements of life go to compose its homogeneity does not at first strike the imagination of the enthusiast. His first impulse is to raise before him a picture which should be devoid of any jarring element. The ideal must be one dream of concord which should smoothly glide before his vision. No price can be too dear, no sacrifice too heavy, for keeping the path smooth for the ideal to travel through.

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Every sympathy may be felt for the idealist, his enthusiasm may be catching but his idealism is not likely to prosper. He has failed to observe that the sweetest concord springs out of the dexterous mixture of elements which are considered to be most disparate. Like the delightful tinge that comes out of the mixture of outwardly repulsive colours, like the exquisite odour which is produced by the combination of repugnant smells, the fragrance of life proceeds from the joining of elements which are looked upon as irreconcilable. *The more one will observe the more he will find* how each and every element, however crude or small contributes to the expansion of life. It will be found that there is not a single factor which can be omitted. Upon the smallest note he will find the excellence, the sweet concord of life depends. Man will then find it necessary to revise his view of life. The claim of every distinct element will press upon him until he will declare that there is nothing which can be neglected without retarding the progress of life.

In his first enthusiasm for the cause of the spirit the Hindu was in no mood to consider the claim of the body. He thought he must choose one either the spirit or the body, and cannot have both. The radiance of the spirit shone upon him

he disdained to be attracted by the crude body. A time came when he went further, and proclaimed that the life lived on this earth was a huge illusion, the work of *Maya*. The spirit alone existed, the body was non-existent. Even creation, the universe, existed not, the uncreated Eternal Spirit alone existed.

Hindusthan did not long remain in this state of meditation. Before invasion from outside awakened it to the condition into which it had fallen, upheaval within the land began to convulse it. Before the clash of arms came the clash of ideals. The body proclaimed its revolt against the complete sway of the spirit. It wanted to assert its importance in life. If life had to be lived, the body could not be neglected. As long as the spirit remains on earth, the body is its only receptacle. The body had been too much neglected, it longed for its recognition and cried for vengeance. The Hindu had become impatient to renew its acquaintance with the joys of the body.

The second stage in the life of the Hindu was thus reached. Like the extreme length to which it had gone in his devotion to the spirit, he felt inclined to proceed to the other extreme, in his adoration of the body. He wanted to make the body independent of the spirit, just as he had

tried to make the spirit independent of the body. He felt consumed with the desire to pull the spirit down from the eminence it was occupying and place there the body to which he wanted to transfer his worship. But in this he did not succeed. It was easy to start a rebellion but it was another thing to gain a complete victory.

The effort of the body to gain back its natural position was sure to come in course of time. It is most arduous task to spend the entire life in contemplation of the spirit. As an ideal it may exist but it is extremely difficult for ordinary man to give his undivided allegiance to it. It is impossible for the bulk of the people to travel along a road on which even the most highly advanced cannot keep their steps steady. The rebellion therefore was only a question of time. It was a different thing to dislodge the ideal and set up in its place an ideal just it opposite. If the Hindu had developed an early longing for spiritual life it was because he had an unique genius for it. Nothing happens at random. Nothing appears in life for which the way has not been prepared from before. It was not the desultory instance of a race alien to all nature manifesting a tendency quite foreign to its nature. The genius for it was there and the material of

life provided it with a field for easy expansion. One need no more wonder at it than he need wonder why, in the tropics, the sun should be so strong, why fragrant flowers would bloom all the year round, why a riot of colours should always be witnessed, and why, under a faultless sky, melodious birds would be singing all throughout the long day and far into the night. A wonderful land had produced a wonderful genius which early gave birth to the sublime ideal of life. It could not be repressed any more than its geography could be changed. So long as the soil was the soil of Hindusthan, the ideal of the Hindu would continue to be what it had naturally blossomed into. The spiritual ideal, therefore, could not be swept away. It fought valiantly against the new ideal of the senses, and bore the scars, received in the conflict, manfully. Ultimately, it came out triumphant, but from its towering height it began to contemplate the growth of a new interest, which it had ignored, and began to doubt if it could be legitimately passed over.

The ideal was destined to receive a much ruder shock: The internal convulsion appeared to be an event of far less moment, compared to the fate that was about to overtake Hindusthan, when the first wave of foreign invasion dashed on its



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shores. The trial of strength, that had taken place during the clash of ideals, did not find the Hindu spiritualist at a disadvantage. It appeared light work to him to worst his opponents, who were by nature prone to his way of thinking. No unusual exertion was necessary to awaken in his Hindu brother his innate love for the spirit. Though the body had come to stay the prior claim of the spirit was, without much difficulty, re-established. The dream of the idealist broke on the arrival of the first batch of invaders upon the land. For the first time the Hindu began to realise what his idealism had reduced him to. He stood aghast at finding that the vaunted cause of his spiritual glory was going to be the miserable cause of his worldly ruin.

Not that the Hindu was a coward. Not that he lacked in the spirit of self sacrifice. There was no adversary on earth who could frighten him. The man, who could go without food for days on end, be content with a single loin cloth, easily brave the elements and smilingly pass by heaps of riches, could not be wanting in the grit of manhood. The Hindu who was constantly dwelling on the life that would be his hereafter could not possibly be a coward. He, who was longing to embrace death to pass into a brighter state of

existence, could not possibly think of clinging to life at all costs.

What did the invader find when he set his foot on the sacred land of Hindusthan, teeming with millions of men? Did he find opposition worth chronicling? Was there any battle fought which could shew that the man-power of the land had gathered together to chase the invaders out of the land? The historian attached to the invading army, the mercenary writer with his prejudiced pen, the amateur traveller without the intelligence to appreciate the bent of the genius of the people, had no doubt pleased themselves by giving what they called to be graphic accounts of the struggles that had taken place. But they had failed to understand what had actually happened. They had not the eyes to see that the whole land was filled with countless spirits, instead of human beings. The spirit was stalking from one end of the land to the other. The figures that were found walking on foot were devoid of flesh and blood. The invader simply pushed through a vast multitude of spirits which could not, or did not, think of offering any opposition.

Existence of caste-system, opposing religious sects, and other similar causes, have been assigned for the downfall of Hindusthan, but they did not

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really contribute to the condition which befell the land. Social and religious rigidities in some form or other, exist in all lands. Hindusthan was not unique in that respect though the forms in which they prevailed were different. Hindusthan teemed with so many men that a fraction of any caste or sect could have pursued the invaders back into their own country, without any fear of ever being outnumbered.

Strange thoughts began to rush through the mind of the Hindu when he found the enemy at his door. The riches that the invader coveted, the power he was seeking to obtain, had long lost all charms for him. The invader could not rob him of what was really valuable in his eyes. Could he take away from him the peaceful contemplation of the spirit in which he took supreme delight? So long as he had a silent corner where he could contemplate the Spirit with tears of joy rolling down his cheeks what cared he for the political or economical condition of the land? If he was not deprived of the kingdom of the spirit of the kingdom of love, he did not mind who ruled over the earthly kingdom. The gentleness of the spirit, which only thinks of folding humanity in one deep embrace, had taken possession of him, The spirit to raise the hands in order to strike had

vanished, the hands were hanging down harmlessly from the body. The fire of revenge had gone out from his eyes, they were looking dreamily into the space.

Slowly but surely the effects of the conquest began to be felt. It began to be realised that the freedom of the spirit postulated the freedom of the body. Free spirit could dwell only in a free body. Without the body growing at the same time the spirit cannot grow. In its earthly career, the spirit cannot dissociate itself from the body. What is more, the body must be made worthy for the spirit to occupy it. The spirit should penetrate deep into the body and etherealise it.

The distinction between matter and the spirit has been emphasised from time immemorial. Instead of finding matter merging into the spirit, human imagination has raised an impassable barrier between them. Matter has come to be recognised as antagonistic to the spirit. When the difference should be considered to be one of degree, it has been taken to be one of quality.

Hindusthan awakened to the consciousness that in neglecting its material improvement, it had endangered its spiritual independence. It found out that the body, for its neglect, had taken a terrible revenge against the spirit. The body

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refused to go to the rescue of the spirit when the latter stood in need of all the assistance the former could give. The conquest of Hindusthan far more than the internal upheaval, opened the eyes of Hindusthan

## CHAPTER IV

### *THE FORTUNES OF THE HINDU GIRL*

The ideal of the Hindu and the stages and trials through which it has passed have all been reflected in the development of the womanhood of Hindusthan. The Hindu woman has been silently taken through the entire way that has marked the course of the ideal. With the ideal of the land she has ascended staggering heights, when the ideal has faltered her steps have also faltered, and when the ideal has suffered she too has suffered.

The ideal of the Hindu helped to form an ideal of womanhood which has scarcely been surpassed in any other land. The acceptance of the spiritual ideal is fraught with one great significance. Before the spirit, the distinction of sex disappears and the essence of existence is made bare for recognition. In the first stage of the life of the Hindu, the spirit in woman came to be recognised just as the spirit in man was sought to be brought to the surface. Man looked at woman with the help of the light that had begun to illuminate his heart. A spirit ran towards a fellow-spirit with



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all the radiance that characterises the soul. The Hindu did not think of finding out the weak elements in woman and use them for his benefit. In the region where the spirits dwell, weakness is more a matter for anguish than for anything else. The sight of weakness grieves the spirit heart. The strong soul bursts with eagerness to infuse into the weak soul all the strength it can command. It goes down by the side of the weak soul and rests not till the last vestige of weakness has disappeared. On the other hand the sight of a soul that has travelled higher in the region of the spirits causes unbounded delight. With overflowing admiration a soul keeps clasped to itself the higher soul till it is able to make its own all the goodness that characterises the latter.

All that is best in woman was raised to a state of high eminence. The Hindu proceeded to lay his tribute at the shrine of womanhood with a warmth of feeling which the highest chivalry in any age is capable of. His imagination soared to a height which even the most ambitious champion of a woman's rights would feel dizzy to contemplate. Man simply stood wrapt in admiration before all that womanhood symbolised in life. Her consecration of life for those she loved began to colour his idea of divinity. The

ever-watchful care of the Supreme Being recalled to his mind the anxious mother's care that had followed his infant life; the radiant look that soothed the anguish of his spirit in moments of despondency recalled to his mind the soft caresses of his fond mother that had dispelled the anguish of his infant heart, as he knelt down before the Supreme Spirit for inspiration, it was brought to his mind how once before in the infancy of his earthly life he had knelt down before his mother for her soft words of wisdom. His heart swelled within him and the cry of "Mother" burst from his soul, as like a helpless child he stood before the Divine Being. In the Divine Being he recognised the Divine Mother. The Hindu began to worship Divinity in the form of motherhood. Womanhood had melted into the form of motherhood, and motherhood was transformed into an emblem of divinity.

No other country has witnessed the idealising of womanhood in this form. No other country has worshipped the Supreme Deity in the form of womanhood. No other country has honoured woman as Hindusthan has honoured her. The religious side of the question does not arise here, nor it is necessary to enter into the merit of a metaphysical analysis of divinity in the afore-

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said manner As an indication of the mind of man towards womanhood, it stands unrivalled in its purity and sublimity

After the sanctity of womanhood was established, it began to develop into all that was pure and lovable All that the higher nature of the spirit would love to cherish began to cluster round the idea of womanhood The Hindu spared no efforts to make womanhood worthy of his reverence

We have seen that the spiritual vision did not last long It was a little too early even for Hindusthan the land of the birth of the spirit It had not crossed the mind of the Hindu that trouble could come from the quarter of the senses He was scarcely prepared for the trial when the senses rose up in arms against the spirit It was all darkness within the body, since the spirit had travelled out of it Forsaken by the spirit a wretched moan proceeded from the body

In the second stage of the life of the Hindu womanhood was faced with a great peril The ideal of womanhood stood in danger of mutilation The Hindu rushed out to taste the joys of power He found an easy victim in the woman of his land Gentle, confiding and unresisting, she became an easy target for the attack of the Hindu Texts

began to be composed, with the utmost ingenuity, which declared the perpetual tutelage of woman. The law-giver laid down the law which should keep bound in chains for ever the fragile creature. The foreigner cannot suddenly believe that the pen that scrawled these humiliating texts could belong to the persons who claimed descent from the hoary sages who had raised womanhood to the rank of divinity. He could scarcely believe that the persons who prostrated themselves before the Divine Mother in the temples were the same who outside the shrines dragged woman down in life. The remarkable picture was portrayed of the consort of one of the Hindu Trinity, Laksmi, shampooing the body of her lord, Vishnu. It was the latter day conception of the Hindu mind, when the second stage in his life had commenced. The pious spiritualist with all the fervour of his soul had associated womanhood with Divinity and had placed by the side of the god, the goddess, whom he also worshipped. His valorous descendant had not the courage to drag down the goddess, but instead drew the shameful picture of the goddess shampooing the body of the god. His degraded mind was ingeniously creating a precedent in Heaven which would be certainly considered binding as a rule of conduct upon woman here on earth. Who

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would after this dare to say that the lot of woman was not to minister to the joys and comforts of her earthly lord ? The second stage in the life of the Hindu introduced curious elements of degradation into the sublime conception of womanhood. The inherent spirituality of the Hindu did not permit him to destroy entirely the ideal of womanhood that had been raised but a rude attempt was made to so mangle it that it might fit in with the lowered conception of womanhood he had come to favour.

By this time the invaders were upon the land. Before the mind of the Hindu could undergo a change for the better and think of restoring the glory of womanhood, the political organisation, by means of which he could direct the destiny of the land had passed out of his hands. At the same time he was confronted with an ideal of womanhood which was inferior to that cherished by him even in his decadence. The Mahomedan did not bring with him an ideal of life which could favourably compare with the ideal of the Hindu whom he had conquered. Organised physical power had gained mastery over the land but mastery over the intellect and heart of the people required power of a different kind which the conqueror lacked in. The conqueror could help the conquered in his degradation, but did not possess

the power by means of which he could raise him higher in the scale of humanity. The Hindu who had started in the mission of the subjugation of woman was reinforced by a powerful ally in his Mahomedan conqueror. For the better or the worse, the rulers possess great power of influencing the minds of those they rule over. The Mahomedan ruler began to infuse imperceptibly into the mind of the Hindu his conception of the place of woman in life. Like the dress the Hindu became eager to don, in imitation of the ruler, he began to imitate the manner in which the Mahomedan treated the woman. Woman began to loom in his view just as she loomed in the view of the Mahomedan as a person whose existence was subsidiary to the existence of the superior person, man. Her existence could only be justified by her ability to minister to the dalliance of life. Insidiously, the Hindu began to desire to find the *hour* in woman, instead of the goddess he had transformed her into. The work of degradation proceeded briskly with the assistance of the newly-found compatriot. New chains were forged for the one-time goddess to wear. Imagination began to be perverted by a fanciful conception of the nature of woman prone to transgress. Once again the genius of the Hindu came to the rescue. The

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would after this dare to say that the lot of woman was not to minister to the joys and comforts of her earthly lord ? The second stage in the life of the Hindu introduced curious elements of degradation into the sublime conception of womanhood. The inherent spirituality of the Hindu did not permit him to destroy entirely the ideal of womanhood that had been raised, but a rude attempt was made to so mangle it that it might fit in with the lowered conception of womanhood he had come to favour.

By this time the invaders were upon the land. Before the mind of the Hindu could undergo a change for the better and think of restoring the glory of womanhood the political organisation by means of which he could direct the destiny of the land had passed out of his hands. At the same time he was confronted with an ideal of womanhood which was inferior to that cherished by him even in his decadence. The Mahomedan did not bring with him an ideal of life which could favourably compare with the ideal of the Hindu whom he had conquered. Organised physical power had gained mastery over the land but mastery over the intellect and heart of the people required power of a different kind which the conqueror lacked in. The conqueror could help the conquered in his degradation but did not possess

the power by means of which he could raise him higher in the scale of humanity. The Hindu who had started in the mission of the subjugation of woman was reinforced by a powerful ally in his Mahomedan conqueror. For the better or the worse, the rulers possess great power of influencing the minds of those they rule over. The Mahomedan ruler began to infuse imperceptibly into the mind of the Hindu his conception of the place of woman in life. Like the dress the Hindu became eager to don, in imitation of the ruler, he began to imitate the manner in which the Mahomedan treated the woman. Woman began to loom in his view just as she loomed in the view of the Mahomedan as a person whose existence was subsidiary to the existence of the superior person, man. Her existence could only be justified by her ability to minister to the dalliance of life. Insidiously, the Hindu began to desire to find the *hour* in woman, instead of the goddess he had transformed her into. The work of degradation proceeded briskly with the assistance of the newly-found compatriot. New chains were forged for the one-time goddess to wear. Imagination began to be perverted by a fanciful conception of the nature of woman prone to transgress. Once again the genius of the Hindu came to the rescue. The



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ideal of womanhood reeled under the new attack, but did not lose its foothold.

Still the trial was not over. Still the lesson had not been learnt. A great nation had come into existence when humanity was in its infancy. Long after other nations had grown and faded away it continued to be a source of wonder and inspiration. One phase of life had been raised to a degree of excellence to which humanity still continues to pay its homage. The world could not afford to lose the ideal Hindusthan had developed. Kingdoms may be built upon the ruins of kingdoms but a lofty ideal once lost is not easy to replace. For a single error of judgment, the nation could not deserve the punishment of being wiped out of existence. An unblemished record stood to the credit of the people of Hindusthan. The people had not injured any one save themselves. They had begun to realise that the fault lay with themselves. But the awakening had not been complete. The torpor into which the Hindus had been thrown centuries of Mahomedan rule had not been able to disturb it. The Mahomedans had not been able to hold before the Hindus any ideal which could quicken back into life the dormant elements of the Hindus. The Hindus continued to slumber as before.

Another chapter in the history of the conquest of the land remained to be written. Another phase in the development of its womanhood remained to be gone through. From distant shores came a people who began to raise a mighty Empire in place of the old Mahomedan Empire that had died a natural death. Mahomedan rule had collapsed because it could not drag on its existence any longer. All its vitality had been emptied and it had forfeited its claim to hold the sway over a great people any longer. The foundation of the British Empire was laid. A striking combination of events began to take place. A transformation commenced which had scarcely crossed the minds of the rulers or the ruled.

Man has never stopped to consider that behind the conquests, behind the din of arms and the shrieks of the dying, the eternal ideal is busy evolving itself out. It has never struck man that beneath the surging passions of mankind and the deathgrip of nations the steady flow of the ideal is maintained. The temporary disturbed surface of the mighty ocean is not the only indication of its existence. To the ordinary mind the events that have happened on the soil of Hindusthan appear to take the form of a grim tragedy. India is looked upon as the lure of nations whose riches

attract them to its shores. It is famous as the land where unequal struggles take place. Nations have acquired their fame for enterprise, bravery and shrewdness by conquering the land while its people have been jeered at for want of manliness. What the ordinary intellect is capable of understanding it has understood. In the flow of blood that is caused it is accustomed to look for the indication of the brave heart and it has found it. In the carrying away of sparkling baubles it is accustomed to recognise the final triumph of man and it has found it. In the clever betrayal of confidence, it finds the mark of wordly shrewdness and it has found it. And lastly in the want of inclination to shed blood, it only discovers the cowardly heart and it has discovered it. It seldom suggests to man that the struggles of nations are capable of any other interpretation. It does not suggest to him that man is hastening towards man, nation is rushing towards nation, to find out and learn what each is deficient in. On the face of the earth there is not a single nation which can proudly say that it has achieved all that is worth achieving nor there exists any nation which need be ashamed of having led a thoroughly worthless existence. If the Mahomedans had sought the land of the Hindus, it was because they had as

much need of the Hindus as the Hindus had need of them. If the British have crossed vast oceans and have landed on the shores of India, it is because they have as much need of the Hindus as the Hindus have need of them. Ideals and not nations are rushing towards one another to subdue and be subdued. Through the roaring of the canon and the greed of spoliation, the spirit and the matter are trying to understand each other and cultivate the good will they cannot do without. If that were not so life on earth would not be worth living. Otherwise, a huge mockery would be found constantly enacted under the sun. Instead of reverently cherishing it, the thought of a wise providence will have to be chased out of the human mind.

The steps of a great nation have been guided to the land of the Hindus. With wondering eyes the daughter of Hindusthan has been gazing upon her sister from the West. The ideals of the West have been blazing forth in full view of the children of the soil.

Modern Europe is the inheritor of a great civilisation. The civilisation that was born in the land of the Greeks, after conquering the conquerors, the Romans, spread into the continent of Europe. With rapid strides the nations of Europe have come

to occupy the foremost rank in the world. Peoples of other continents are vying with one another to imitate all that distinguishes Europe. They are eager to follow in the wake of the great European people by making their own the ideals that have raised Europe to its present eminence.

The advancement of the West is the wonder of the present age. Into all the walks of life have been infused an energy and vivacity which humanity had not experienced before. To call it a purely materialistic civilisation and to be able to detect in it nothing more than the glorified picture of crass matter signify a state of mind which always dwells on extremes, and is not able to appreciate anything that is either foreign to its nature or with which it is not already familiar. If the West commits the serious blunder of misunderstanding the East, the East is not to pay back the compliment and commit the serious blunder of misunderstanding the West. It is not possible, in the nature of things, that the many-sided claims of life can be excelled in simultaneously by any single race or people. The efforts of various peoples and races are collaborating to develop the ideal of humanity, in all its richness. From the different quarters of the globe forces are con-

verging to constitute the brilliancy of the ideal of mankind. To fail to understand this is to miss altogether the way in which humanity is working out its progress. To claim on behalf of the East as having put forth everything that is of any value in life will be to take the same one-sided view of human progress when making a similar claim on behalf of the West. The West, like the East, has got its shortcomings, but it has marvellously developed a side of life which is almost in touch with what the East may justly claim excellence for. The devotion with which the West is trying to make life yield the delights of existence is sure to bring it, in the fulness of time, into the very region from where the East has been drawing its inspiration of everlasting bliss. An adjustment of view-point is all that is necessary to put both the West and the East on the right side of the path. Till that time comes, it will be sheer waste of opportunity not to examine each other in the spirit in which one imperfect soul ought to examine another.

Like her sister of Hindusthan, the daughter of Europe has been working out in her life the ideal of her land. She has been embodying in her womanhood the best fruits of the civilisation of her country. She has captivated the imagination

of her sister of Hindusthan just as the civilisation of her country has captivated the imagination of Hindusthan. The daughter of Hindusthan beholds in her sister from Europe an ideal of womanhood which she has not set her eyes upon since the days when her misfortune first began. To what extent is she prepared to go with her sister of the West? Will the daughter of Europe find in her sister of Hindusthan anything worth copying? Will the ideal of the West replace the ideal of Hindusthan or the two combine to form a rare blend of ideal womanhood?

## CHAPTER V

### *HINDU MARRIAGE (I)*

In a silent corner the Hindu maiden sits with her hands folded in prayer. She has taken her morning bath and her long black tresses are lying stretched over her body. She is wearing a piece of silk cloth which every Hindu loves to wear when sitting down for meditation. A light filigree receptacle, containing a mass of sweet-scented flowers, culled with her own hand, stands by her side. In deep meditation she is opening her young heart to the God of gods.

Outside, under an azure sky, the sun has come out in its dazzling splendour. All nature has been tinged with the glorious hue of the morning sun. After the short spell of a summer night, the gay birds are comparing their notes to see if they possess the fulness of the voice by which they love to startle the silence of the woods. The southern breeze is softly rippling over the river. The flowers still bear the traces of tears the night shed on them at the time of parting. It is just the time



everything life may have need to pass man is seeking to realise his conception of the beautiful. Art penetrates every sphere of his life. Everything a man would like to have, he would have it cast in a beautiful mould. His æsthetic sense must be satisfied before he can be well content with any demand of life. His love of art is not exhausted by making an article of necessity beautiful. He loves the art for its own sake. Utility ceases to be a factor and the delight the art provides is considered supreme.

While beauty should have such a hold over man it is strange there should exist such wide disagreement regarding what is to be accepted as beautiful. The notion of beauty varies not only with a race or a people almost every individual would seem to have his own idea about it. No standard of beauty exists for universal acceptance. While a group of persons may be drawn towards a thing they consider artistic, another group may not share the same enthusiasm and may look upon it with positive displeasure.

The rise of a thing into favour as a beauty and its falling into disfavour are subjects of absorbing human interest. It is instructive to watch how a thing which in one period of man's life enthralls his imagination, loses its charm

when another period succeeds. Similarly, a thing that in one epoch of human life is considered as an unfailing source of delight ceases to attract man in another epoch. It is strange that the notion of beauty should be always on the move. You cannot keep it tied to a single object for ever. Now it is here, the next moment it is there, again it has flitted away. The heart of man which is ever longing for the beautiful finds it ever eluding his grasp. The more he tries to keep it folded round any single object, the more it delights to fly away from it. The thirst for beauty alone remains.

In what does then beauty consist? Where does it reside? What is the sense that can unerringly guide man in the choice of a thing that is really beautiful? Man is constantly attracted by art but has seldom analysed the relation of art with himself. He does not think it necessary to examine the link that connects him with the thing of beauty. Like most things he does in life, he leaves the sense of beauty to take care of itself. He grows impatient if he does not get the pleasure he expects. He leaves the whole thing to be decided by the senses amongst themselves, but he wants them to judge rightly for him. Since he abdicates his power in favour of the senses, the

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strongest sense for the time being becomes the master of the situation. The strongest sense is often the crudest sense which leads man to form his estimate of beauty. Though not often in time, the other senses resent the dictatorship exercised by one of them. Man then discovers that he has played into the hands of the wrong party. His conception of beauty stands shaken. Beauty has hovered away from where it had rested. The search for beauty commences anew.

Man is always eager to find out means by which he can please himself. Whatever his pursuit may be he wants it to yield him the delight without which he cannot get on in life. In the thick of the most difficult undertaking he is anxiously looking forward to the joy the ultimate issue may bring him. The joy that may be his share is ever influencing him to act. The supreme desire of his life for joy is ever manifesting itself in his numerous occupations. Every ideal of life for the man concerned is a joyful ideal. The end and aim of life is to find out the everlasting source of delight.

The search for the beautiful, therefore, does not stand isolated from his main object in life. He tries to draw the utmost pleasure by the cultivation of his æsthetic sense. He tries to perfect

his sense of the beautiful, to make it an abiding source of joy for him. Even into the smallest act of his life he has to throw his entire self. The entire man acts whenever he acts. Delight of a certain kind may originate with a particular sense, but it is the soul of man that has ultimately to be pleased. What does not delight his inner self, he does not finally accept as delightful. He may dwell for a time on an object which most strongly attracts him, but he stays not there if his innerself is not satisfied. As he moves on in his search for the abiding source of joy, he moves on in his search for beauty, till he is able to discover that which is truly beautiful and remains so for ever. It is the ultimate soul value a thing possesses which makes it truly beautiful in the eyes of man.

Thus the progress is made towards the ideal that lives for ever. The eternal spirit in man cannot rest content till it has been able to find out the joy that is eternal. From the outward form of beauty which pleases him for a time, he proceeds to find out the inner soul of beauty which should delight him for ever.

Man has to extricate himself from the confusion into which he has fallen by not distinguishing a *person* from a *thing*. He often thoughtlessly

thinks himself to be surrounded by one vast array of things. The standard he has applied to *things* he constantly feels disposed to apply to *persons*. A beautiful person is often in his estimate nothing more than a beautiful thing. He looks for the same hue in persons he has admired in things. The loveliness in things indicates to him the kind of loveliness he would expect in persons. Slowly and silently the person is brought down to the level of a thing. The soul in the person escapes the man, the cover passes for the reality.

The beauty that has to be discovered in a person is different from the beauty that distinguishes a thing. Man, who is inclined to think of beauty in terms of a thing is simply amazed when the beauty of the soul is revealed. The artist can never depict the colour that tinges the beauty of the soul. He can never draw the shape which gives grace to it. The senses become mute when the heart is filled with the joy the contemplation of the beauty of soul brings. That beauty never fades, the hands of time cannot touch it. Admiration does not make it blush. It becomes sublime as the tribute of the heart reaches it. The more it is dwelt upon the more glorious it becomes. The eyes tire not, the senses do not cry halt. The desire for it becomes eternal.

As the maiden pours out her heart's devotion to *Maheswara*, she finds that the image of the Lord has undergone wonderful transformation. It is no longer an animal skin the Lord is wearing, it has turned into a glittering dress in which the costliest gems have been set. She does not any more behold the body of old age forming the body of the Lord. Eternal youth is seen beaming out from the body of the Lord. The gaze of the Lord crowds into her maiden heart emotions she has never before experienced. The smile playing on the lips of the Lord raises her young soul to a state of sublime delight. She realises she has never set her eyes on one so supremely beautiful like the Lord. *Maheswara* stands before her as the perfect type of beauty which she would ever like to cherish.

The young heart has travelled from the form to the soul of beauty. She has left the surface and has penetrated deep into the inner region. Her outer eyes do not lead her any more. Her inner eyes have guided her to a realm where beauty in its most delicate and ever-youthful form reigns. Her soul has begun to take lessons on true beauty. The many qualities that adorn the Lord begin to appear in her eyes as indispensable elements which go to form real beauty. Beauty in her estimation becomes inseparable from goodness. The good

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is the beautiful. The eternal beauty is enshrined round the eternal good.

The Hindu maiden thus forms her ideal of beauty. She desires her partner in life to be beautiful like *Maheswara*. She prepares her soul for the reception of her beautiful consort after the manner of the goddess *Sati*. No other type of husband has any attraction for her. Her soul refuses to take any substitute. Passing outward glitter cannot charm her any longer. The doors of her soul have been thrown wide open. The beauty of the inner self has stirred her heart.

It is the ideal that is pursued which makes all the difference between one nation and another. The fervour of the soul exists in every man. The spirit of devotion is present in every heart which yearns for the true and the good. If man is not able to follow the right course, it is because his ideal does not help him to do so. If what is eternally true and good does not unfold before the vision of man it is because the true the good, the beautiful ideal has not been found. Man is wonderfully faithful to the ideal he accepts as the guide of his life.

The ideal of a husband which the Hindu maiden cherishes reflects the ideal of her mother.

land, the spiritual ideal of Hindusthan. She cares for no other ideal. Her heart does not hesitate. She embraces the ideal with all the ardour of her soul. The ideal does not stretch before her a thorny path. She proceeds all along the line as delightfully as she would walk through a bed of roses.

The form of marriage that prevails now in Hindusthan had been preceded by forms of marriage which still exist in other parts of the world. Union between man and woman was looked upon in the light in which it still continues to be viewed by societies in the West. It would be committing a very sad and serious historical blunder if it were thought that the present conception of Hindu marriage had been existing from the remote past. In the earliest days in Hindusthan a man chose a woman for his partner-in-life and a woman accepted a man as her husband just after the manner such choices are made in the West. The existing form of marriage, which followed the acceptance of the spiritual ideal of life, superseded the earlier forms. To ask the Hindu to accept the notion of marriage, as it is found in the present day in the West, will be asking him to accept something which is not new. It would be asking him to retrace his steps to a stage which he has left behind in the



distant past It is the Hindu who, more than any other person, requires to be told this fact

There was a time in the life of the Hindu nation when a man gaily attired in the colours of the rainbow, his hair dangling in ringlets, used to approach the coy maiden and lay bare his heart overflowing with love for her In the most glowing language he used to plead the cause of his love and declare how life without her would be desolate While the pale moon reclined in the western sky and the southern wind laden with the odour of innumerable blossoms wafted past the Hindu lover used to imprint the kiss of love on the hands of his lady in token of the passion that was consuming his soul A thousand darts used to pierce his heart when he despaired of winning the coveted hand of the lady he loved. He also used to feel the joy too deep for words, when the murmur of assent escaped the lips of his sweetheart. Life, in its sweet cadence, used to appear like a piece of heavenly music which could never cease to please

The heart of the Hindu maiden used to throb in response to the words of love which she was wont to listen to Innumerable delights of life used to rise before her as the man who attracted her went on with his professions of love She

used to wait from day to day at the trysting place to hear the soft words of praise that her lover bestowed upon her uncommon beauty. Ever and anon she used to change her dress and put on the clothes that set off her charms to the best advantage. Life without her lover appeared to be worth not living. Her lover's name used to be the last word on her lips when she fell into the repose which her strained nerves needed. She also used to wither away when the sweet dream of love was broken and love became hopeless for her.

The expectations of young hearts in Hindusthan had been formed on the lines along which ran the expectations of infant humanity all the world over. The delights of young life in this country had flowed through the channels through which they had flowed in the other parts of the world. Human life is not the only instance in which the delight of youth first takes this form. The entire living creation takes its first taste of delight in this manner. The dazzle of the form provides life with the earliest kind of joy. In the beginning of life, all colours that could make the surface attractive to the eyes threw living existence into an unutterable state of delight. The beauty of the form becomes the delight of existence. By means of

the radiance of forms animate life first attracts its partner. The first wooing of love is made with the help of the bright exterior. Inspired by the consciousness of bright features the lover dances in the full flush of youth and invites the beloved to participate in the joys of existence. With life throbbing with delight the gratified eyes lead on and love receives its response. All consciousness all beauty first spreads on the surface from where all delights first take their rise.

Evolution of life passes from the simple to the complex forms. The cruder senses lead the march of life before its inner springs are touched. Infant life cannot be expected to exhibit the manifestations which mark its growth in the advanced stages.

Marriage in Hindusthan has long since passed beyond the elementary stage. The early mode of securing a life's partner has gone out of date. The Hindu has long since deliberately thrown off the yoke of the outer senses. Through the serenity of the inner consciousness the search is made for a life's partner. The altered outlook of life has brought about a great change in the manner of carrying out life's most serious transaction. No more a man decked in his best clothes goes out to win the heart of a lady he wishes to espouse.

No longer a pretty girl tries to pick out from a number of young men her future husband and bestows on him the sweetest smile she can call up. Those who make the welfare of the young persons their own know no rest till they have found out desirable spouses for them. A bachelor, learned in the Vedas, who has just finished his student life, is looked upon as the most worthy person whom a young damsel may wed. Such a person the father invites to his house and to him gives in marriage his girl, adorned in her best apparel and jewels. While the hymn to love is being chanted, the everlasting knot with the sacred *Kusa* grass is tied round the hands of the bridegroom and the bride. Across the sacred fire the vision of the Divine *Makeswara* rises for a moment before the eyes of the bride and melts into the earthly form of the bridegroom in whose hand her hand remains clasped. In the girl with the softened gaze, whom the fond father with trembling voice makes over to him for ever, the bridegroom finds the earthly counterpart of the goddess *Sati* who would thence-forward preside over his household.

## CHAPTER VI

### *HINDU MARRIAGE (II)*

Many things would be missed in a Hindu marriage which the societies in the West look upon and cherish as the heritage of civilisation. Freedom, the breath of life, would in such a union appear to be conspicuous by its absence. The whole thing is apt to be considered as one unmitigated exercise of patriarchal control, a relic of old times.

Not only an inexperienced young girl is induced to accept as her partner in life a man who is a perfect stranger to her, but a young man learned in the Vedas, quietly submits to the choice made by his guardian. How can the student who has acquainted himself with the mysteries of creation, be so easily made to surrender his right of choosing his own partner in life? In spite of his learning has he failed to form an adequate conception of freedom which is the privilege of man to exercise? Has a long course of social tyranny robbed him of the instinct to act freely in a matter in which

the birds of the forest act with freedom ? The spectacle of a girl, raising no objection to marry the man chosen for her may not cause much surprise, but the fact of a man, who has deeply pondered over the problems of life, submissively walking to the altar and accepting the hand of a girl, whom she has never met in life, stands in need of some elucidation.

What is freedom ? When a man is said to make his choice freely ? The idea of freedom is taken to be so firmly rooted in the mind of man that it may seem scarcely necessary to enquire if by freedom a man understands what he means. Every moment of his life a man realises what it is to act freely and is quite conscious when he acts with freedom and when not

In old days when fight to a finish was the object of unstinted praise, a man who had brought his adversary to the ground was certainly considered to have the right to despatch him with one blow of his scimitar, and no one would have disputed that he was not free to act in that manner. Every prisoner of war was the special booty of the captor and he was free to deal with him as he liked. The victor of old was free to treat a whole nation conquered by him as an enslaved people. But do these marks of freedom retain their character in

the present times ? Why should now loud complaints go forth if a place of worship or a library were fired upon during wartime when in times past it was considered a glorious act to smash down temples and churches ? Why should an act considered to have been done in the exercise of plenitude of freedom and extolled in one age, be execrated in another ?

A man who has come out on a pleasure excursion considers himself free to roam about in the forests and take the lives of as many in-offending animals as he likes. A man who has amassed a mint of money with hard toil possesses the freedom of not giving a single farthing towards the relief of suffering millions. The capitalist who has paid the wages contracted for to the labourer who helped him in making the pile is free not to enquire if the wages are sufficient to keep the body and the soul of the labourer together. A man is free not to expose himself to unnecessary risk to save a comrade from the jaws of death. The man upon whom has descended the light of heaven is free to lock it up in his bosom and not take the trouble of carrying the message from door to door. But still man does not feel satisfied that he has acted as he should have. He thinks he has not played his part in life well. He is afraid his idea

of freedom has led him astray. He even becomes a little ashamed of himself.

What is freedom then ? If a man does not tread upon the rights of another, is he not free to do what he likes with himself, his possessions, and the world outside ? What is there to take pride in freedom, if a man cannot act in this manner ? Like everything else that man has to learn in order to know, a man has to learn how to be free. Freedom is certainly exercised by doing what a man likes, but a man has to learn what he should like. Man learns to like, as well as to dislike. Freedom does not consist in doing anything a person may like, but in doing what a person *ought* to like. One must learn to decide rightly before he can act freely. A man is free only to do what is right. The freedom of rightness should be writ large on whatever he does. He should shew he is a free being by doing what is right.

Once the conception of freedom has been correctly formed, all that a man should do and avoid doing falls into order. One who has accepted the righteous ideal has enfranchised himself. He breathes the pure and invigorating air of freedom and would not allow himself to be dragged any more into the stuffy atmosphere of convention. The higher self has awakened in him. He sees with



other eyes and hears with other ears. He has gained the freedom of the spirit and is free for ever afterwards.

The battle of life rages continuously between the spirit and the senses, each struggling to gain dominion over man. He is constantly invited to accept the felicity each has in its power to confer. Each promises to take him to the land of eternal joy. Man has to make his choice between the freedom of the spirit and the freedom of the senses.

The senses have all the strength on their side which the flesh can give. They are the first to arrive in the field and have all the advantages the first-comers reap. They moreover form the base upon which the temple of the spirit is raised. Life cannot get on without them. Existence on earth has the senses as the broad doors through which consciousness travels in and out. It would seem to be their nature to keep man for ever closed in their embrace. In all the richness of variety the senses always come out in new forms to captivate the heart of man.

The tyranny of the senses has been the subject of unceasing lament on the part of man. He has been constantly bemoaning his lot that the senses should be so strong and he should be a mere plaything in their hands. Just a little error creeps

into the view that is taken of the real state of things. The senses are no doubt strong and exert all the influence they are capable of. Their power of attraction need not be minimised. But the real nature of their strength is not well understood. The senses are not a fraction so strong in themselves as they become when the individual identifies itself with them. Whenever the individual does so, it puts upon the senses the impress of its infinite nature. The infinite charms of the senses spring from the infinite nature of the individual that rests on them. All the time the senses are considered supreme over the individual, it is the individual that is infusing into the senses the strength which makes them supreme. As soon as the individual ceases to identify itself with the senses, they fall all in a heap and the man himself wonders that he ever should have allowed them to gain mastery over him. He only fails to see the prominent part he took in his own subjugation.

Man can never be said to be acting freely when he gives the lead to the senses. It is an entirely false conception of freedom when he thinks he is free to accept the promptings of the senses if they are strong enough. It is not the glory of freedom but the bond of slavery he covets. More often,

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therefore, it is a case of avoiding a false idea of freedom than anything else

It is considered ridiculous that a bride should be chosen for a man by others and not by himself. How could he like, much less love a person whom he has not chosen? Every one has got his likes and dislikes. It is not possible that besides himself any one else would so well understand what he may like or dislike.

Man only flatters his vanity when he thinks in this way. He forgets that he never acts in this manner in the most cherished affections that he forms in life. The mother whose very sight thrills him with joy, the father who with anxious care watches him grow, the brothers and sisters, separation from whom he cannot bear without a feeling of wrench, he did not choose a single one of them. His affection for them is not any the less strong or genuine because he had no voice in selecting them.

If the manner in which man proceeds to make a personal choice and the factors that influence his decision are examined, the hollowness of the so-called freedom of choice stands revealed. We would like to leave out of account the rare case when a shrewd man of the world, advanced in life, goes to the matrimonial market to make his selec-

tion He may be expected to avoid the pitfalls which entrap the unsophisticated young man fresh from the college. Though we do not entertain much hope for the exercise of independent judgment by this shrewd man of the world, in view of what the immortal Thackeray has observed with reference to his celebrated character, Rebecca, that a young woman conscious of the possession of an average amount of beauty can hook any man she fishes for, still we will let him pass. In the case of an average young man bent upon matrimony, thrown into the company of an average young woman, with a fair knowledge of playing the cards, it is often a case of first come first served. Like the clothes a person wears on a Sunday, select manners are cultivated for these occasions. Very rarely a man finds scope for the exercise of his cool judgment, when the senses have everything in their own way. The young man is still to be born who, in the company of a fairly attractive young woman, wisely ponders over the categories of Aristotle, instead of thinking of the freedom young persons are allowed to enjoy under the mistle-toe, during the yuletide. In almost all cases it is the victory of passion that is celebrated, although vanity and a long established custom prevent a person from making the confession.

We are well aware of the distinction that is drawn between ante-nuptial and post-nuptial love. We are also quite familiar with the view that marriage without a prior attachment cannot be called a union of love. Light literature would cease to be entertaining if the theme of love were woven out between a married couple. We remember having read in a book written by a Bengalee just after his return from England, that our form of marriage deprived us of one of the greatest thrills of life experienced during the period of courtship, preceding a marriage, in the West. It is for psychological experts to say what truth underlies the opinion of a celebrated French doctor who declares that love is a kind of disease which attacks persons of a particular age and temperament, and that medical science would ere long be able to find out a cure for those suffering from it. These are however, topics which do not properly arise for consideration in these pages which only narrate *and explain customs as they exist in the Hindu society*. We would be seriously misunderstood if the impression is created which is farthest from our *intention* that it is desired to hold up to ridicule the customs of other countries. Were it not for the fact that a critical time in the lives of our young persons has arrived, on account of the ideals

of the West being constantly held before them, we would not have considered it necessary to enter into a brief comparative examination of the customs of the two countries. European customs are often looked upon with great approval and there is every danger of the idea being impressed upon the minds of our young persons that our customs, where they differ from those of the West, should be considered to be in fault. We have not spared our own customs and we would be wanting in duty if we do not bring out the good points they possess in comparison with the customs of other countries

In the case of Hindu unions, on account of the existence of caste rules, marriage between persons of equal grade in life is an assured fact. Marrying outside one's circle, which is frequently deplored in the countries in the West, is made impossible in the existing state of Hindu society

Although Hindu marriages are brought about by the elders of the families, the factor of selection, to the extent it is really necessary, is invariably present. All qualifications and accomplishments of the young persons, judged from the standpoints of education, health, and wordly circumstances, are well weighed in the balance. Consent of the parties, sometimes directly, but very

often indirectly is sought, and instances are extremely rare where in direct opposition to the wishes of a young person a marriage is settled. It is not a fact as it is often tried to be made out that in a Hindu marriage two strangers with limbs tied down are sent down a precipice.

The sanctity of a Hindu marriage is well known. Marriage is a sacrament with the Hindus and the religious knot is tied once for ever. Even in the hated days when polygamy was at its height, its sanctity was not challenged. Attempt was never made to untie the knot on the part of the woman, even when it proved to be most oppressive. We have not the least desire to find virtue in those objectionable kinds of marriage which have become or are fast becoming obsolete. In discussing the Hindu marriage we have all along kept in view monogamy which the better minds of the Hindus look upon as the only form of marriage permissible to them.

The manner in which the minds of young persons are made ready before the event of marriage and are kept tuned thereafter is a guarantee for the uninterrupted happiness of the married couple and the young persons never feel that they are handicapped in life for not selecting each other. Those who know the laws of human mind know

best that the preparedness of the mind to find happiness from a state of things, accepted as final, invariably helps man to find it, unless there be something uncommon in the circumstances which may stand in the way. The ideal of the Hindu marriage is so high-pitched and at the same time so humane that it is practically impossible that ruffled days would follow, except in those rare cases which would always exist, even if the ideal conditions of existence were brought down upon the earth.

As soon as the bond is tied, according to the Hindu conception, bones are said to mingle with the bones, flesh with flesh, heart with heart, and the married couple are looked upon as forming one body and soul. Without the partner-in-life, some of the more important religious rites cannot be performed. No wonder that from the bridal night the husband becomes an earthly *Maheswara* to the wife, and the wife an earthly *Sati* to the husband. The Hindus are never tired of repeating the celestial love-story of *Maheswara* and *Sati*. *Sati*, the devoted wife, expired, because she could not bear to hear her adored husband maligned by her own father, and *Maheswara*, with the dead body of his beloved *Sati* on his soulders, roamed over the worlds, like one fren-



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Passion has no place in such a sacred union. It is a case of devotion first and devotion ever afterwards. Domestic happiness inevitably follows such a union. Often the last words that die from the lips of a Hindu wife are that she may have her husband as her consort in the lives to come. Where does freedom, as it is commonly understood and exercised in the selection of a partner for life, lead a person to ? The development and consequences of this freedom can be well traced through the societies in the West which have accepted it as a cardinal principle of life. It is as easily brought to disunion as it brings about union. It exerts such a hold upon the imagination of persons that there is almost a feverish anxiety to scrutinize if freedom has been, at every step sufficiently exercised. The extreme length to which this freedom of freedom has travelled may be gathered from the thoughtfulness on the part of enterprising captains of ocean liners, who provide the vessels with clergymen who may tie the marriage knots during the voyages, and also from the rapidity with which the knots may be untied notably in America. Freedom and constancy would seem to be two opposite conceptions. We would not pursue the topic any further for we feel quite sure that the better minds of the societies in the West

are already anxiously considering the means by which freedom may be prevented from degenerating into license.

We are concerned to find that efforts are being made to bring into fashion this idea of freedom in India. In Bengal, the mischief is being attempted to be made by a class of hare-brained writers who, in imitation of third rate sensational writers of the West, have commenced writing nauseating stories of *laisons*, which they hold up before readers as stirring instances of the freedom of soul that may be exercised by either sex. What has commenced in Bengal is sure to be imitated, ere long, in the other parts of Hindusthan. We cannot enough condemn these writers as enemies of progress, and it is a thousand pities that for the sake of small gain and cheap notoriety they do not hesitate to corrupt the ideas of their innumerable brothers and sisters, specially those who are young and susceptible.

## CHAPTER VII

### < AGE OF MARRIAGE

Hindusthan is looked upon as a land of regrets that will make angels weep To the foreign eyes, at the first blush it presents a wonderful spectacle The tall plam trees out-lined against the glorious evening sky, the mountain peaks on which eternal snow rests, the dashing waves of the ocean which almost encircle the country the tropical sun, the many coloured birds with rich plumage, the elephants, the roaring lions and tigers all combine to raise before the mind of the visitor from the West a picture which lingers long after he has left the country When with this impression of the country the sympathetic man of research explores the old books of wisdom of the people and finds untold treasures lying hidden within them the people of the country are acclaimed as a wonderful people possessing a wonderful genius One class of our countrymen hunt after these words of appreciation and with pride exhibit them as unmistakable evidence of their greatness We do not share the joy of those of

our countrymen who want to raise their country to the pinnacle of glory so cheaply. The more the greatness of our past is referred to, the more we feel disposed to hang down our heads with shame, conscious as we are of our present state of degradation. As we see all around us evidence of the inglorious condition into which we have fallen, we piously wish we had never the much talked of past to torture and mock us with its memory

The day is vividly impressed upon our mind when with our mother we arrived at Hardwar, the celebrated place of Hindu pilgrimage at the foot of the Himalayas, from where the sacred Ganges takes its rise. The Ganges flowed under the very windows of the house in which we were stopping. Presently the sound of music, ordinarily heard on festive occasions in society, attracted our attention. It sounded strange in our ears at a place like Hardwar, which we had long associated only with *Sannyasins* and sacred rites. A marriage procession slowly emerged from round the corner and the whole place overflowed with the delightful tunes the band was playing. The occasion was the celebration of a marriage in a rich Hindu family. The bridegroom was returning with the bride to his home after the marriage

night. Every one was in a state of high glee. The bride could not be seen as she hid her face behind a rich golden veil. But on the richly decorated *Chaturdol*, by her side, was sitting the bridegroom, in his princely dress, a boy of six years only. What added to the humour of the situation was that, shortly afterwards, we found the bridegroom playing at marbles, in front of his house, with another boy of the same age. While the elders were enjoying the occasion and felicitating one another for the happy connection formed, the boy, the chief actor in the drama, was panting to come back to his marbles. The bride, a beautiful lady of five years must have been crying to come back to her mother's arms. Can there be any doubt that our country is wonderful! We feast upon our past and fly into a temper if we are told we are backward.

It is a historical fact that, not many centuries ago, child marriage was practically unknown in the country. On the other hand, on account of the rigidity of the caste system, girls sometimes remained unmarried till they were well advanced in age for want of proper bridegrooms. But after the advent of the first foreign invasion a change swept over the country. We consider it quite unnecessary for our purpose to discuss the

unpleasant reasons why the Hindus thought it necessary to marry their girls before they reached the age of puberty. Soon after the Hindus were compelled to introduce this change into their society, necessary rules of *Shastras* were framed which proclaimed the merits of such marriages. In course of time, the *Shastras* laid down the punishment the offender was to incur if the rule was violated. In a country where a priestly class, sitting at the top, lays down the rules of society which are unhesitatingly obeyed, it does not take long to enforce a change in the rules of society. When the political condition of the country necessitates the promulgation of such a change, the new rule is at once cheerfully obeyed. Within a short time the country underwent a complete change with regard to the age at which its daughters should be married. The present practice is apt to induce in the minds of most persons the belief that child marriage, as an institution, had been existing ever so long in the country. If the Hindus could lay down rules for the observance of the society as they did in the past, not much time would have been required to revert to the old practice in the altered political condition of the country. The old state of things would have been as silently restored as it had been changed. But the condi-

tion of the Hindu society, after centuries of foreign rule is not the same as before. The prestige of the priestly class has been rudely shaken and its members do not exercise the same control over society they did in times past. Long adherence to the practice of child marriage has also brought about a rigidity which will take sometime to overcome. But a change is being silently wrought in the minds of the educated persons. The evils of the practice have become very glaring and most people would be only too glad to shake it off at once if they could do so without fear of social molestation.

The evil of child marriage becomes most conspicuous in contrast with the custom of the Hindus not to marry the widows of the upper classes. We have treated the subject of widow marriage below. An Act has been passed legalising widow marriage but the volume of opinion against it is very large and the number of widows married since the passing of the Act may be counted on the fingers ends. Whatever obloquy attaches to the practice is derived from the existing custom of child marriage. However high the ideal of a man may be or whatever religious scruples he may have the mere sight of a girl married at the age of five, becoming a widow two years after

wards, is sure to shatter his faith in the merit of the practice. In proportion to the strength the advocates of widow marriage are gathering for their cause from the existing custom of child marriage, the upholders of the practice of child marriage are to that extent becoming less rigid in their opposition to raise the marriageable age of the girls.

Several factors are working to raise the age of marriage for our girls. One of them is the age at which a Hindu young man now ordinarily marries. The average age of the Hindu bridegroom is not less than sixteen and is gradually on the increase. With the present angle of vision, the Hindu thinks the difference in age between the bridegroom and the bride should not be by many years. The bridegroom is becoming more and more of opinion that marriage should be as real as possible, in the existing state of society. The educated young man is decidedly becoming averse to marrying a mere child. In Bengal, the poet Rabindranath, in one of his popular poems, in his usual humorous way, reproduces a dialogue between a newly-married Bengalee couple. The age of the bridegroom is about twenty and the age of the bride about nine. After the first few days spent at the bridegroom's house, as the time



for the return of the bride to her father's house approaches, the young husband, his soul gushing out of him, with a tremor in his voice enquires of the bride, how she will be able to bear the shock of separation and spend the days when he will not be by her side. The bride without a moment's hesitation natively replies that she will spend the time in celebrating the marriage of her dolls! This at once knocks all romance out of the young man.

The economical condition of the country is another reason which is helping to raise the marriageable age of the girls. It is becoming more expensive to give girls in marriage. Dowry, in the marriage of girls plays the same important part in this country as it does in other countries. Girls, with handsome dowries, are married more quickly than girls, without dowries. The worldly aspect of marriage frequently leaves the spiritual ideal of marriage severely alone. A very praiseworthy desire has arisen amongst some of the educated young men of the day, to make it a principle to marry without dowries, but it will be long before the fathers of girls, with insufficient means would derive practical benefit from such noble resolve on the part of a few of our young men. Meanwhile, the struggle for existence requires

longer time to collect the necessary dowry for finding suitable bridegrooms for girls and the fathers have to wait longer for their marriage

The desire to educate the girls is responsible for the practice which is slowly growing up among the advanced section of the community not to marry them before they are fifteen years of age. In old times education was looked upon as an essential qualification of woman and history has preserved the memory of famous Hindu women who distinguished themselves in literary and other fields. The enforced reduction in the age of marriage of the girls greatly restricted the scope of educating them. The upper classes of Hindus have always considered education as the *sine qua non* of life, and even to this day instances are common of Hindu learned men imparting knowledge to pupils solicitous for it, without remuneration. The desire to educate the girls has once more taken hold of the people of the land, and the present rulers of the land are trying in their own way to spread education among the girls. Education necessarily means putting off marriage for sometime, and as a matter of fact for that reason marriages are not hurried as before.

Lastly, the anxiety to preserve their health by not marrying the girls too early has been acting

as an additional reason. The example of the European girls marrying after they have come out of their teens and keeping their health well preserved has been influencing the minds of the Hindu parents a great deal.

In noticing the causes which are combining to effect a change in the marriageable age of the Hindu girl we must not be understood to convey the idea that the entire Hindu population has been animated with the desire to act in the manner indicated. Before the lot of the women may be ameliorated there should be improvement in the condition of the men. Education, which mainly helps to diffuse improved ideas has not yet touched more than ninety percentage of the people of the land and it is idle to hope that Hindu India will be regenerated in the course of a few decades more. All that can be said at the present moment is that the upper strata of the society have been moved and this means a great deal. It may now be reasonably expected that the practices which are favoured by them will in course of time be imitated by the people in general. In order to quicken the process, the educated men in the country have to do all they can to spread advanced ideas among their less fortunate brethren.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE HINDU WIDOW.*

We were just then completing our college career. To our debating club we used to invite, now and then, gentlemen of high position to take the presidential chair. One of our friends, who is now a member of the bar and a leader of public opinion in his part of the country, had written a paper on widow marriage. On this occasion we had invited a distinguished Mahomedan officer to preside. The memory of the great Bengalee reformer and philanthropist, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, was still green in our memory. Among young men who had received English education, it had become the fashion to lend their support, at least in writing, to the cause of widow marriage. An educated young man was looked upon as having wasted his opportunity if he had not a word to say against what was called the inhuman Hindu practice of keeping widows unmarried. Our friend, the writer of the paper, in a very high-flown style, had cried down the evil which, he said, was

eating into the vitals of our society The reading of the paper finished, we divided into two groups to support or oppose the writer When the debate came to an end, the president, who was in the prime of life, with his flowing beard rose up to offer his concluding remarks We all expected that as a distinguished member of the Mahomedan community, amongst whom widow marriage was prevalent, the president would in glowing language uphold the practice of widow marriage What was our surprise when instead of doing so, he began by distinguishing the Hindu marriage from the Mahomedan marriage characterising the former as an essentially religious union contrasted with the latter which was only a civil contract He asked the Hindus who wanted to marry their widows to carefully consider the effect the practice would have on the tie that bound the Hindu couple Thundering applause greeted the president from the opposition which, it must be said was in a poor minority

Since the days when Iswar Chandra Vidya-sagar moved the British Government to pass the law enabling the widows to marry according to the Hindu *Shastras*, it has more or less formed one of the burning topics of discussion among young men who have received English education

From the old archives of the *Shastras* no doubt solitary rules, whose authenticity is challenged, have been discovered which allow the widows to marry in very exceptional circumstances, but unanimity of opinion exists about these rules having never been, within recent times, carried into actual practice. Modern orthodox writers of distinction, such as Bankimchandra in Bengal, introduced into the fictions of the day the story of widow marriage, but the heart of Hindusthan still remains the same as it was before the Widow Remarriage Act was passed. In the columns of papers, at very distant intervals, insertions may be found of solitary instances of widow marriage, though not more than a dozen respectable Hindu families will be found in the country who have either married or are willing to marry their widowed relations. The actual state of feeling in the country will reveal the truth that no grievance worth mentioning is made of the fact that the widows are not allowed to marry. We say no grievances worth mentioning, because of the reason that a widow in some minor points finds herself at a disadvantage as a member of the family. That is, however, a different subject altogether, and is easily adjusted in the light of a more liberal view of the widow's position.

The foreigner from the West is tempted to look upon the attitude of the Hindus as proceeding from an entire ignorance of the position of woman in life backed by the desire not to make her in all respects the equal of man. Critics are not wanting who in no measured language put it down as a brutal practice which the backward Hindus are only capable of adhering to. They refer to *Sutteeism* the practice of widows immolating themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands and loudly say that it is no wonder that the country which brought this practice into existence will not tolerate the marriage of widows.

Now that a fair amount of time for propaganda on either side has elapsed, it is possible to examine in a cooler atmosphere why the practice of not marrying widows should persist. The enquiry becomes interesting in view of the fact that widows are not allowed to marry though there is no bar to widowers marrying as often as they like. Why should there be in a country, which boasts of spiritual advancement such glaring distinction between the practices of men and women? We have already referred to the unique honour conferred upon womanhood in Hindusthan by identifying it with divinity. Why should in such a country woman be put under a great disability, compared with man?

It is necessary to remember what has been said regarding the Hindu form of marriage and its implications. We have seen that in all his acts man keeps his ideal before him, from which he draws his inspiration in life. The spiritual ideal of the Hindu lays stress upon the eternal as distinguished from the temporary. In all the serious transactions of life the Hindu cannot but bring his ideal into operation. Marriage, the most important event in the life of man, was accordingly fully spiritualised. It became a spiritual union which should endure for ever. The husband and wife became one in spirit. The union was not only for this life but for all eternity. The husband and wife could not desert each other and the relationship continued after the bodies had been reduced to ashes. After such a marriage is solemnised before God as a witness, its effect upon the minds of the couple becomes naturally tremendous. When to this is added the training the Hindu receives regarding the merits of conjugal fidelity it is not very difficult to appreciate the feeling of constancy with which the relationship is cherished, even after death.

After all, what is there in idealism? Why should it incessantly draw the minds of persons towards it? We know the times in which we live



of the inhabitants all the year round. The minds of men naturally began to cherish lofty ideas. If anywhere idealism could thrive infant Hindusthan provided just the environment for it. If anywhere man could desire to sacrifice everything for the sake of an idea, Hindusthan was the place for it. Man approached woman in a spirit of idealism. The seal of idealism was placed upon their union. It became the pride of life to remain ever true to the ideal. No rival ideal appeared to draw the minds of the people away from the ideal of the land for a long time.

Appreciation of the idealism of sacrifice is common. Every reader of romance admires it and would be quite upset if the picture is marred. He loves to see the heroine remain faithful even in the most trying circumstances. He loudly applauds every sacrifice that the hero makes, including the supreme sacrifice of life. He knows it is very difficult to imitate them in real life, but still he has his fervid admiration for them. The love story of Romeo and Juliet moves the heart of even the hardest. There is always a sacred corner in the human heart for the ideals of constancy and self sacrifice.

The much maligned *Sutteeism*, which once prevailed in the country, placed in its proper pers-

pective, would cease to appear horrible. It cannot be questioned that the practice of a wife burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband originated in the voluntary desire on the part of a woman not to survive her husband. It is equally undeniable that however praiseworthy the act otherwise may be, it was a case of suicide. It differed from an ordinary case of suicide, but society is bound to put it down if it is openly committed. But society does not withhold its appreciation when it finds that the act is an accomplished fact. Whoever has thought of blaming Juliet for killing herself over the dead body of Romeo ?

It does not take a long time to twist a practice and give it altogether a different shape. This was soon done in the case of *Sutteesism*. Instances of *Sutteesism*, which were naturally rare, at once raised the family, to which the woman belonged, to a position of high eminence in the country, and the families that were regarded with veneration in the country were seized with a desire to emulate by having at least one *Suttee* in their midst. Moral pressure came to be used in course of time. Advantage was also taken of the practice to get rid of a widow who stood in the way of designing heirs to the property of the deceased. Ultimately, open *Sutteesism* became deservedly

unpopular, till it disappeared from the country as the result of legislation. But the fact remains that it sprang from the same idealism which prompts a person to pass the remaining days of life by cherishing the memory of the deceased partner in life, with one step further removed.

In every society there exists a class of busy bodies who make it their occupation to find out what they imagine to be cases of social oppression and heroically come forward to receive praises for their efforts to eradicate the evils. These persons often do a lot of mischief. Instead of adding strength to the cohesion of society, which they are incapable of doing, they busy themselves in trying to pull down things, which they find to be a much easier game. Such a class of persons in our society began to break their hearts over the condition of the widows of the land. They would have cried themselves hoarse till the end of time without attracting any attention, were it not for the moral support they received from the communities in the country, amongst whom the practice of widow marriage exists.

There are also some members of the Hindu community who fail to appreciate the ideal which their widowed sisters are trying to realise in life. They have been brought into existence by the

spread of western culture in the country. The real attack, therefore, is made by the presentation of a new ideal of life. The new ideal draws its strength from being followed by a people who lay a high claim to civilisation. The critical faculty in such cases is disarmed. Along with the virtues of a great people its short-comings are often imitated. The tide of popular appreciation of the customs of a successful people, who have acquired mastery over a large portion of the world, is usually very great.

We are reminded of the time when shortly after the first English settlement in Bengal, English education was introduced into the country. A great institution was started in Calcutta which turned out some of the most brilliant men of the time. It was conducted by highly cultured European professors, and the Bengalee students, who are noted for their intellectual acumen, very soon helped to realise the expectations of the pioneers of the movement in the province. Not only the students began to adore Shakespeare and Milton, Shelley and Byron, but they began to imitate the manners and habits of the Europeans who, in their youthful imagination, appeared to be the embodiment of the highest culture. It has been recorded how the young men considered

it absolutely necessary for completing their education, to drink and eat after the manner of the Europeans. They wanted to appear big in the eyes of the Europeans and to shew them that they were not behind hand in doing what the most civilised people on earth were capable of doing. To their hearts' content they began to drink and eat the forbidden flesh. While they broke the hearts of their dear and near relations, their own hearts swelled with pride at the thought that the last vestige of difference between them and the Europeans had been swept away. The Hindus of the upper classes are strict teetotalers and rarely partake of animal food. The culture of the land has made them so. The young men however began to look upon their old habits as the root cause of their backwardness. They wanted to shake them off and be brave like the Europeans who ate and drank freely.

Just about this time the desire to uplift the women of their country began to agitate the minds of these educated young men. The pitiful sight of the young widows began to draw tears out of their eyes. How life was being spoiled and youth wasted. What beautiful brides the young widows would make and how instead they were being consigned to living graves. Bless their innocent hearts.

what noble resolve did not some of the young men make in their club rooms to march into the country, seek out young widows, induce them to be their wives, and thus make at least some desolate hearts pulsate once more with the joys of existence !

This noble but misguided band of young men has ceased to exist. The busy-bodies, whom we have honoured by a reference above, are no longer sanguine in their expectations of reforming their country-men. But the spread of Western ideas and the association of the Hindus with the Europeans have been constantly keeping before the Hindus an ideal of life which is very different from the ideal of life of the Hindus.

It should be borne in mind that the spiritual ideal is an ideal of restraint. The delights of life may be drawn by gratifying the senses as well as by restraining them. The just claims of the senses have to be recognised, but many of the most prized joys of life are secured by keeping the senses under control. The life of control is not easy to attain. The path leading to it is beset with obstacles. Once, however, the goal is reached, the perpetual joy resulting from a controlled life richly compensates the troubles undertaken. On the other hand, the surrender to the senses does not cost any effort. It appears like running

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through one long and delightful programme All thoughts and desires are concentrated on the issues of the moment. Time is flying and life must be made to yield the delights of existence here and now Who can say what may happen in the future? The yearning may not come back. The joys may cease to please. Let then the goblet be filled while youth lasts The appeal to the senses is immediate

Both the past and the future are swept away The past ceases to torment and the future need not be built upon. The present is supreme Why feed upon the past, when there is every chance of the present being more joyous? Who says that the delights of the past do not return? As long as life lasts, there is room for joy So the fleeting senses speak and the response is immediate

The unfortunate practice of child marriage which was foisted upon the people, and from which the movement of widow marriage inaugurated by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar derived all the strength it possessed, is destined to become a thing of the past. No longer the minds of men would be horrified to find mere children deprived of the chance of a life-time by being sacrificed to a cruel custom which gave girls in marriage at

an age when, besides the sound of music and the sight of illumination, they are unable to understand anything else relating to the ceremony.

It may be said that a girl married at the age of sixteen may become a widow within the next twelve months, and what waste of life would be committed if the young widow were denied the pleasures of existence during the rest of her life. It should be remembered that the ideal meets the demand of the youthful mind completely and hushes all desire to repeat the ordinary pleasures of life in a fresh environment. Since the young parties to a Hindu marriage unite for all time, the snatching away of one of them by the hand of death does not, under the influence of the spiritual ideal, leave the other quite desolate. If the ideal has well taken root, which in the normal condition of the life of a Hindu always does, what happens in the case of the loss of a parent or other near relation, which cannot be replaced in this life, happens in the case of a young person whose beloved partner-in-life has departed this life. What does a devoted son do when he loses once for ever his dear father ?<sup>1</sup> What does a fond mother do when she has lost her dear son, the angel of her heart ? Under the influence of the Hindu

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conception of marriage, the young person proceeds to do exactly what a bereaved son or a mother proceeds to do. In the sacred corner of the heart the young person proceeds to keep enshrined the holy memory of the departed and cherishes it as long as life lasts. The memory becomes life like and the young person draws the delights of life by constantly associating with it. It does not matter that the departed was the companion of life for a brief space of time. The brief space of time under the influence of the ideal stretches into ever so long a period and life becomes quite full of the associations of the departed. Who has not admired the hero or the heroine of the books who has pined away the whole life without even going through the joys of an earthly union? The joys of the senses cannot compare with the joys of the spirit. There is more joy in cherishing the memory of one dead than in associating with a number of the living. Search the hearts of the women of Hindusthan and you will find every heart bursting to say what we have written in these pages. The thing might not be said very artistically but it would be told more effectively. Destroy this ideal! Can there be any substitute for it? What other country contains such fine specimen of womanhood?

It is not true to say that the widows are coerced by society and that many would marry again if they had not to face extreme social odium. Every ideal, in its infancy, has to be carefully nursed, but if it is worth anything, intense joy, in course of time, is felt by working it out in life. In Hindusthan, the land of the ascetics, the ideal of control and sacrifice is quite common and any number of persons may be found embracing it cheerfully. To say that the women of Hindusthan, who in early life eagerly take part in numerous religious rites, which often necessitate fasting for more than a day, do not, when they become widows, cheerfully welcome a life of restraint in memory of their adored husbands, is to traduce the Hindu women without any justification whatsoever. The life of purity and renunciation the Hindu widow leads is the product of the highest culture which consists in welcoming, in furtherance of an ideal, a life of restraint in preference to one of gratification.

The words of our Mahomedan friend are ringing in our ears. The tie of the Hindu couple would not be half so sacred and conjugal happiness would not be so complete, if the union were not made once for all. If the bereaved were to find consolation in a new union, the first union will lose most of its charms. For Lord *Maheswara*

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there was one *Sati* For the goddess *Sati* there was one *Maheswara* That is what the Hindu thinks and that is what the Hindu marriage has to teach the world. Conjugal union once for ever will become the future ideal of humanity So long as the senses predominate, the call of the ideal may not be heard It may not be heard for still a long time to come, but that it will be ultimately listened to and followed there cannot be any shadow of doubt, as there is no doubt that the highest ideal will, in course of time, be the commonest ideal

While the lofty ideal has been nourished in the hearts of the women of Hindusthan, and the men are doing all that they can to keep it alive there what are the men of the land themselves doing? A cause is not advanced by the mere glitter of words or by bringing forth a laboured explanation. The ideal was promulgated by man and was meant to be followed both by man and woman Woman has stood loyally by it but man has lagged behind. This is an accusation to which the men of Hindusthan have to plead guilty The Hindu no doubt admits that the wife of the first union is *Dharmapatni*, wife in the eye of religion, and that the rest are wedded for the delight of the senses, but still he does not desist from

taking another woman as his wife. While women are made accountable before the bar of men, for deviating from the ideal, men, who flout it, think they are accountable before no tribunal on earth ! A growing desire for the pleasures of the senses has gradually brought the men down to a level which would have made the *Rishis*, their ancestors, famed for their self-control and renunciation, extremely miserable.

A change for the better is visible. The culture of the land is bringing about in the minds of our young men a distinct change. What the Hindu widower should have been, it seems he is slowly trying to be. Instances of Hindu widowers, advanced in life, marrying again, have never been common. Amongst young men, specially among those who are educated, the desire is gaining ground not to marry for a second time. Notable examples are increasing. The women of the land are, by their noble examples, silently taking back the men to the right path. Instead of the ignoble examples of men destroying the sublime ideal, loyally followed by women, the women are about to convert the men, who brought the ideal forth. We fervently wish that the men would soon wash off the stain of reproach from their character and shew that they are worthy



of the devotion of their high souled women, and are not a whit behind them in their loyalty to the ideal of the land. The ideal of remaining always linked with a person of the opposite sex is purely an ideal of the senses which has very little to recommend it for its acceptance either by man or woman.

It may be said that young widowers and widows by not marrying deprive society of valuable help which they would have been able to render it. This is, however, not a fact. The truth lies just the other way about. Like those who remain single, to be able to lead a life of philanthropy, the widowers and widows are more free to do good to society.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *SOCIAL RELATIONS*

The minds of men are widened with the process of the sun. The right course does not suggest to man all at once. He grows wise as time advances. Woman's lot in life at last appears to be brightening up.

The first thought of man, as he became the dominating factor in society, was that woman had an assigned place in life. From time to time, in different countries, man's idea about woman's position in life has undergone changes, but everywhere man has been of the opinion that woman has a position to fill in life, different from that of man.

Love of power is one of the passions of life. It did not take much time to decide, even when society was just forming, that woman's position was subordinate to that of man. Man should command and she must obey. Society has advanced a great deal, but the guiding idea of woman's subordinate position has lived on. The position of woman has required adjustment according to the changing conditions of society, but the under-

lying principle has been always the same to keep woman subordinate to man.

As a corollary to the principle of subordination, man has always made use of woman when his selfish object has dictated it. Woman has meekly obeyed and served man.

Domestic circle naturally became the first assigned sphere which woman was to make her self active in. She was at first considered quite unfit for the larger relations of society in which man alone took part. She has been allowed to travel out of her domestic circle, now and then, with the admonition, however, that all her legitimate hopes and joys should revolve round the home and the hearth.

About the division of work in life, at no time there was such unanimity of opinion as in the present age. Life's occupations are numerous which are best performed when they are appropriately divided amongst the different members of the society. Nature has also made a great distinction between man and woman. But the important question remains, how far should this distinction between the sexes and the principle of division of work, necessary for the better compliance of the social needs, be allowed to influence the broader relations of humanity, which the hum

blest member of the society along with the highest, women along with men, are equally called upon to cultivate in life? After the routine of work is finished, the human soul, whether it lives in a cottage or resides in a palace, whether it is encased in a male or a female form, longs to embrace the larger relations of life. The expansion of human soul is its first necessity. There is an inherent desire for it. It may be repressed for a time but is bound to work itself out ultimately.

Every individual must ultimately identify itself with humanity, out of which it has sprung. It takes its first lessons within the domestic circle, makes its broader acquaintance of life in the society to which it belongs, and ultimately has to realise its end by identifying itself with humanity. No life can have a healthy growth, nor can fulfil its destiny, if it is kept back from participating in the larger human relations. Neither the plea of the sex nor that of rank can be of any avail. It is not necessary for the rich to constantly mix with the poor, nor are women required to behave just exactly like men, but all have to respond to the common call of humanity, to realise the end and aim of life. One common ideal of life should inspire men and women, whether they are rich or poor, live at one end of the world or other,

follow the same religion or not. Different spheres of action, which must necessarily exist, do not stand in the way of the realisation of the ideal of life. It may be realised by the hewer of the wood in his hut and the king in his palace if only the main interests of life are kept in view and cultivated. If the variety of creation and the numberless occupations stood in the way of human progress, the Highest Intelligence would not have wasted His time by bringing them forth.

The spiritual ideal of life, more than anything else, helps to realise the common bond of humanity and the larger interests of life with which it is entwined. It levels down distinctions and brings the intrinsic worth of things into prominence. The human soul is laid bare for recognition and development.

In Hindusthan, as we have seen, very early in the life of the people, the spiritual ideal had been accepted as supreme. It appeared as if life in this country would reach the acme of progress without passing through the stages of development, through which it had to proceed elsewhere. The ideal, however, had been hurriedly reared up by ignoring other claims of life which form necessary elements in its progress. The change in the political condition of the country opened the eyes

of the Hindus. The progress of the country, which only a free people can make, was retarded.

In the early life of the Hindus, the position of woman was all that could be desired. Though life in its manifold activities had not unfolded itself and human ideas had not broadened, as they have since done, yet all that suggested to man, in that infant period of life, had been recognised in developing the womanhood of the land. But, as we have seen, the ideal of life pursued was one-sided, and at the first shock it reeled. The position of the woman of the land reeled too. On account of the political condition of the land and the gradual imitation of an inferior ideal, the proud position of the Hindu woman fell. The worst outrage was committed when child marriage was forced upon the community. The *purdah* system, which was unknown in the country, became the necessary adjunct of the life of the woman. Instead of developing womanhood by associating it with the larger relations of society, the progress that had been hitherto made was summarily thrust aside. Love of power began to regain its hold over the Hindu. Woman's subordinate position was emphasised. The Hindu law-givers put on record what was described as the natural disquali-

fication of the sex for responsibility in almost every walk of life

What a great triumph the Hindus scored over their mothers and sisters. The mothers and sisters, however, remained impassive to the set-back in life they suffered, and held on to the spiritual ideal they had learnt to cultivate. The women-folk did not at all mind their changed position, continued to make the main interest of life revolve round the home, and cheerfully cultivated a life of self abnegation. People from distant lands who visited the country took home the story of Hindu woman's degradation. Did not they also take an account of the wonderful books of wisdom the Hindus had composed, their Vedas and Upanishads, which boldly proclaimed the oneness of man with God, which no one in any other country had ventured to conceive? Did not the wisest of men in other countries say that they had found in the teachings of the Upanishads the solace of their lives? The Hindu swelled with pride on hearing the praises that were showered upon him. The story of woman's degradation after all was a minor thing. It did not count so long as the might and glory of his pen were recognised. The mothers of the land may well solace themselves with the appreciation the sons had received.

Evolution does not take note of feelings and sentiments, sighs and tears. It picks out the necessary materials, gathers them together, and on it goes in the line of progress. Delays and temporary setbacks also form the milestones of progress. As the eyes may see, the march of life often appears to run zig-zag, but it goes right through. No good cause can be a deserted cause and no people can be a God-forsaken people. The very first thing that the Hindus are required to do is to recover the genius of the land. Before they rush on to imitate others, they should study and appreciate the ideal which once had made them great. In the light of the ideal of the land the necessary improvement will have to be made. It would be foolish to think that improvement means the bringing back of the past outright. No one can take delight in the work of demolition but so far it is necessary it has to be undertaken. Destruction is a part of construction. Nature everywhere does it, but in the right proportion. Along with the desire to bring back the past in its entirety, the opposite desire to build everything anew will have to be resisted. The right understanding of the ideal and a careful study of the lessons of the past are sure to give the necessary guidance.



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If in the past the prevailing condition of the country introduced the *purdah*, the cry of the present times has been to tear it to pieces. No one can long remain enamoured of the *purdah* the quicker it goes the better. But the spirit which the *purdah* is to be removed must be the right spirit, which should prevent the commission of excesses. The act of pruning is a necessary one, but is also a dangerous process, if not well guarded. Pruning with things highly detrimental to the well-being of the society, things may be pruned down which are highly beneficial and whose worth is ascertained only by a careful analysis.

The nations of the West, politically free, also seem to have made their women free. Men and women breathe the same atmosphere of freedom. Should not the Hindu woman be free like her sister in the West? Should not she take part in the development of the life of the nation just as her sister in the West does? Why should she not mix freely with men and contribute to the joys of life? Should she not take her rightful position in society like her sister in the West?

These questions have been long exercising the minds of our men and women. They are not openly and calmly discussed as their importance deserves. Passions and prejudices are very often raised and

mar the result of all discussions, and the matters remain unsolved as before. Meanwhile, life silently flows on and the process of unthinking imitation does its work.

Though not as the result of open understanding, and, in the present state of the Hindu society it has become difficult to come to such an understanding, many changes have crept into the lives of our men and women. The many institutions in the country, which have been started by the rulers of the land, have also been gradually helping to bring about the changes.

The decision of the Hindus has, however, been unmistakably given in one important matter, in connection with the cultivation of the larger relations of social life by women. The Hindu women have become eager to take part in the movements which affect the welfare of the women and the children. It is the legitimate function of women to be associated with all that concerns themselves, and the children, their first care. It is admitted that without the intelligent guidance of the men, they cannot just now render much valuable assistance. Their association with the movements, however, has a value all its own. By doing so, they are able to exchange ideas among themselves, and what is more valuable, they are

able to put forward for consideration their distinct point of view

Regarding the welfare of the children, the men and the women are alike interested, but there cannot be any doubt that whatever suggestions the women may have to make will be of great value. The subject of the welfare of the women themselves is sure to prove a knotty one. The women have first to carefully find out what is *really* good for them. In works of philanthropy for destitute women and children, their help would be both welcome and valuable. In no sphere of activity woman shines so brilliantly as when discharging the duty of the ministering angel. The many matters touching the welfare of the women and children which deserve consideration by the women cannot be exhausted, and literature relating to them, as time goes on, should accumulate to help them to take the right view of things.

Whatever the Hindu women think or attempt to do in these directions, one thing should remain engraven on their minds. They must not forget that they are Hindus and that their requirements in life will not necessarily be what the requirements of other societies may be. The views of life other societies take need not be disparaged. What may not suit one set of persons may suit quite well

another. But before changes are introduced the Hindu point of view should be carefully examined. It becomes, therefore, absolutely necessary that Hindu women to qualify themselves for taking part in social movements, should first thoroughly study the ideals of the Hindus. It is then only that they can render the valuable assistance that is expected from them.

In another important matter, the considered opinion of the Hindus has been given. It is a matter of far reaching consequence affecting the entire fabric of the society. The Hindus are decidedly of opinion that their women should not mix freely with the men in the manner they do in the West. *Purdah*, they originally had not, and they are quite sick of it. It is bound to disappear very shortly. But they never bargained that they were removing the *purdah* for the purpose of allowing women to mix with men, without restriction. They have never thought of doing so, and what is more, they do not consider it either necessary or proper to do so.

Many things a man does are the result of his habit. He likes to do a thing, because he has done it so often. He often gets into the habit of doing a thing, without knowing that he is so doing. He loves to move in the line of least resistance.

It does not require strength of purpose to form a habit, though it is necessary for breaking it. Man's weakness leads him on. The senses simply love to be pleased. They dote to command man in all things, only they find a doughty opponent in Reason, whose dictates man honours above all things, though he finds them hard to obey always. The weakness of man always prompts him to persist in any habit he may have formed.

The pleasures of life naturally circle round a habit that has been formed. Under the influence of a habit man would not like to be told that the pleasures of existence would have been equally found by forming a different habit.

The man in the West would be simply struck dumb if he were asked to take part in the functions of life like the Hindus, who do not consider the presence of women necessary to make each and every one of them successful. He would refuse even to go to a church if it were meant exclusively for men, and he is deprived of the pleasure of kneeling down before God in the company of women. In modern India we know the prayer halls of the followers of some of the dissenting religions, built in imitation of Christian churches would have very thin gatherings if the women did not go there.

If the Hindu were to put the question to his brother in the West, why the latter does not love to dance with men as he loves to dance with women, what answer will he make ? The first reply that may rise to his lips is that the question is simply absurd. A wag may, in his humourous way, put the counter question, why not dance with a moving pillar as well ? It is notorious that in the dancing halls women, who are neither young nor attractive, do not find partners to dance with. Yet dancing is looked upon as an art and said to be loved for its sake. It is so graceful and divine. But all grace vanishes if there is not a youthful partner to dance with, and she should not be the wife of the male partner.

The desire of youth to associate with youth is obvious. Like every other desire it has to be kept within proper limits. In the West, where the practice of selecting life's partner exists, there is some reason for young persons to mix with one another. In our country, where the practice is different, it is considered not the right thing for young unmarried men to seek the company of young unmarried women, and *vice versa*.

It should not be thought that an attempt is being made to bring back *purdah* in another form, to raise a wall once more between men and women.



No one grudges the coming together of men and women on occasions when it is *necessary* to do so, but if the freedom of women is what is desired, they can certainly be free without mixing constantly with men. Women can take part in all the activities of life and be free in the best sense of the word, without requiring a man to be always at her elbow.

Associations for women can exist side by side with associations for men. If associations for particular classes of men may flourish and do useful work, there can be no reason why associations of women, embracing all the activities of life, should not exist and render valuable service to the country. The views of such associations would command far more weight, on account of the exclusive stamp of womanhood they would bear, and, where the welfare of the country is concerned, different views are far more valuable than the repetition of the same view from all corners of society.

With regard to many of the ordinary pleasures of life, in proportion that a man desires to find them outside the circle of his home, and teaches woman to do so, both would find the joys of home life, which constitute real happiness receding from them. Home will cease to have attractions

if they seek for attractions elsewhere. If a man parrot-like utters, what he has heard many others say flippantly, that it is simply boring to have to spend a whole evening in the company of his wife, he has no reason to wonder if his wife learns to look upon his company in the same light.

Why rob life of the major portion of its delights by forbidding young persons to mix with each other, the young man would petulantly say. We daresay many a young woman, who has not plunged deep into the frivolities of life, would not endorse what the young man says. If delight is found in the giddy joys of life, we should have the frankness to acknowledge that the passion of man is responsible for it. We remember the wise observation of a celebrated English lawyer made while commenting upon the story of Eve tempting Adam, in the garden of Eden, by pressing him to eat of the forbidden fruit. He pleasantly observed he would not pass any judgment without hearing the other version of the story, what Eve had to say. When man is the writer of the story, and he has written almost all the stories, it is always the same, the fault is with the other sex. Who has not heard it said that the temptation always comes from the quarter of woman ?

## CHAPTER X

### I

#### *EDUCATION*

The subject of education, in a treatment like this, appropriately comes last. The manner in which the Hindu girl should be brought up has to be ascertained first, and thereafter it becomes comparatively easy to devise means how best to educate her. Often in selecting a course of education this important aspect is lost sight of, and the result is a desultory kind of education which does not fulfil the hopes cherished. This is conspicuously the case with regard to the education of the Hindus in India. After nearly a century spent over the education of the children of the soil, the result has been amazing. Save for the activities of the young men in certain well known directions, such colossal ignorance about everything of importance relating to one's country and its people will not be observed among young men of any other country in the world. We leave it for competent persons to say if this state of things could not have been avoided.

The art of educating the people has been remarkably well studied in the West. It may be boasted there that, once the persons in charge of the administration of a country have decided to bring up the people in accordance with a particular ideal, they know how to do it to perfection, in the course of a few decades. We have been told that the German culture, at the back of the late Great War, had been infused into the minds of the people of the land by means of a carefully prepared scheme conceived long before by the ambitious political leaders of the country. Standard books, historical writings, even romances, had been cleverly composed, which would instil into the minds of every one the culture for which Germany stood. Public orators, teachers in schools and colleges, even preachers from the pulpits, in the most natural manner imaginable, told the young and the old of the land all about the great ideal for which Germans should live and, if necessary, die. The whole thing was executed long before ordinary persons had the faintest idea of the climax in which all this was to end. In course of a single generation, every one in Germany was fully imbued with the idea the political leaders of the country wanted to inculcate. As for the success it met with, it is now a matter of history. Who may say that

the next instalment of lessons on culture has not already commenced in that country ?

If a preconceived scheme of training produces such marvellous results, any course of education prepared for women requires to be most carefully scrutinised. We have not the least hesitation in saying that the education of the Hindu women has been hopelessly neglected, and whatever efforts have been made up till now have had the effect of straying them away from the ideals of the land. In this unfortunate country nobody would seem to be seriously anxious about the education of the people in general. The education of women is looked upon as a subject which may very well be left to take care of itself. In this state of things it is no wonder that a fond parent may often be seen going into ecstasies while relating that his daughter could write letters in English.

In the general scheme for the education of the people, the imparting of religious instruction does not find any place. It is whispered in certain irresponsible quarters that the Christian rulers of India cannot actively help in spreading a heathen religion, that no sooner they do so they would be made accountable before the representatives of the Church in the mother country. Judging from

the religious toleration maintained by the rulers, there cannot be any truth in the statement, but it should be shewn by means of tangible steps taken that there is no foundation for it.

We had once for a while the good fortune of enjoying the confidence of a Hindu education minister. appointed under the Monteford Reforms. We were told about a scheme the minister carried in his portfolio which would find a place for religious instruction for the Hindus in the curriculum of studies for schools and colleges. He took care to impress upon us that the course of studies would be non-sectarian, as far as possible, so as not to offend the feelings of the warring sects among the Hindus. That was the first and the last time we heard of any scheme for educating the Hindu youth in the religion of their land.

It may be said that in this age of free-thinking, the imparting of religious education need not be the care of the State, but should be the concern of the individuals. We do not at all subscribe to this view. It does not even apply to the countries in the West, much less to the Hindus with whom religion is a living faith. The bulk of the people, all the world over, submit to the influence of religion when everything else fails. We do not know if freethinking is synonymous with confused

thinking, but we know that the very few persons who boast of it end by believing monstrous things which the most superstitious persons would refuse to accept. Religious education still continues to be the first necessity of man and the youthful days are the most precious time when it should be imparted.

For women, in their present state of advancement a course of religious training is indispensable. In the case of Hindu women whose very breath of life is religion without religious training they must be considered to have received no education. The trials of life fall most heavily upon the women. With the abundance of feelings that characterises them they are often apt to break under the load of sorrows they have to carry. The absence of religious consolation which in the last instance soothes the troubled heart and can come only from a course of religious instruction received early in life, would make the life of a woman unbearable.

The first question that naturally arises is how to educate our girls. The only reply we can at present give is educate them anywhere except in the institutions which exist in the country for them. They have not been started for the benefit of the Hindus exclusively. We know of the

composition of the governing body of a big institution for the education of the girls. In the governing body, besides the representatives of the Hindus, there are representatives of the Mahomedan, Christian and Brahmo communities, and the head of the institution is a Christian lady. The students are drawn from all the communities in the province. During the hours the girls remain in the institution, they have to manage to forget and only on their return home are reminded of the religious persuasions to which they belong. Think of the religious instruction, which we consider the first thing necessary for the girls, that can be imparted in such institutions.

On account of the absence of provision for the religious instruction of the Hindu girls, and for the more important reason that no thought whatsoever is bestowed upon the cultivation of the Hindu ideals, these institutions are of no value. Far from being taught to cherish the Hindu ideals of life, a girl leaving such an institution carries ideas which embarrass her in life and often make her doubt the worth of the sentiments the Hindus so much cherish.

We would give a sample of a conversation which the Hindu girl has to listen to in such an institution. A Christian girl, harmlessly narrates



in her youthful way all about an incident which is going to take place in her family. Her father died when she was only six years old. Her mother, who was left without any resources in life, could with great difficulty maintain her only child and herself. She was advised by some of her neighbours to join a school where typewriting and shorthand were taught. In the course of a year, she learnt shorthand and typewriting fairly well, and got the situation of a stenographer in a big office. Her neat and careful way of doing work attracted the attention of the assistant manager of the establishment whose secretary she became. Just one year had passed since she was raised to her new post and now a very happy event in her life was going to be celebrated. She was going to marry the assistant manager next Christmas. As the girl finished her narration, she twined her arms round the neck of Ramá, a Hindu girl of her age to whom she was very much attached and with joy beaming out of her countenance asked Ramá to come over to her house to see the preparations that were in progress. She told Ramá confidentially that thenceforward she would have good clothes to wear and have a piano of their own on which she could play to her heart's content.

And would not Ramá come and try the piano when it was brought home ?

Let us have another sample of a talk with which the growing mind of a Hindu girl may be impressed. Ilá is a Brahmo girl, who is much liked by the girls reading with her in the same class, for her proficiency in her lessons and her winning manners. She could not bear to see a girl sitting in the class with an unhappy face. She would hasten to her, and at once with some of her brilliant stories, of which she had an inexhaustible fund, make her friend laugh, and help to dissipate the last traces of her unhappiness. One day Ilá did not come to school in time. Every girl was wondering what had happened to her. Shortly afterward Ilá made her appearance, and it was as clear as the noon-day sun, and a most unusual sight for the girls, that her eyes were swollen. What could make *her* unhappy, was the chorus of enquiry with which she was greeted, as the bell rang for the recess hour? To her class-mates gathered round her, in a subdued voice, most unusual with her, she gave out the whole story of the unhappiness of her elder sister, who had returned to her mother that morning. Her sister had been married to a brilliant student of the Calcutta University, who was now in the superior

grade of service under Government. One son was born of the union. Unhappily, however, the husband and wife often fell out and the last quarrel a rather serious affair, took place a few days ago and her sister could not bear the situation any longer, and had run to her mother, without the knowledge of her husband, and had brought her son, a child of four years with her. Her sister had made up her mind to live separate from her husband, and her mother was taking legal advice to obtain an order for judicial separation. She burst into tears as she finished her story, and all the girls sobbed aloud with her.

In what estimate would a Hindu girl hold the customs of her community, if she continually listens in the most impressionable period of her life, to such and similar stories? No Hindu father can think of sending her girl to a place where she gradually learns to dislike the Hindu ideals of life.

No great value can be attached to purely literary education if it has to be gained at the cost of moral development. During the last few centuries preceding British occupation of India, practically no arrangement existed for educating girls in public institutions. If that be taken as an indication of the rank state of ignorance in

which the minds of the Hindu women remained during the period, we should say that a more erroneous estimate cannot be formed of the real condition of our women. Certainly they did not compose jejune poetry or write disgusting stories, during the period, but the character they developed, by reading only the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and a few other books, and by living in an environment surcharged with religious and social ideas, all their own, is incomparable. If at the cost of the development of character, our girls memorise a few lines from some modern authors and show proficiency in playing on the harmonium, whose sound grates on the ears of our musicians, we would much rather prefer that they go without the education the schools provide.

As a matter of fact, it takes very little time to educate the intellect only. Under the British rule, in the public institutions, which are open to the children of all classes of the different communities, the children of the Hindu lower classes may be seen showing signs of development of intelligence in no way inferior to the intellectual parts of the children of the higher classes. When, however, a comparison of the manners, tendencies, and morals of the children of the different classes is made, it becomes apparent that in spite of the

same intellectual level they have attained, the differences in other respects are very great. Our Hindu brethren, more than any one else, require to be told that the value they put upon the mere intellectual training of their girls is insignificant, compared with the development of the social, moral, and religious sides of life. To sharpen the intellect takes very little time but to develop a tendency for the easy grasp of the moral side of things takes centuries of training. Many nations, in spite of their political greatness, have not yet been able to develop a genuine love for the moral side of life. On account of their inability to stick to the moral standard in their practical dealings with others, many nations have lost the eminence to which they had been raised by their intellectual shrewdness backed by physical power. Our brethren should beware that they do not recklessly destroy the moral tendencies of their girls which have been acquired in the course of centuries. The rigidity of the caste-system has no doubt rightly come in for a large share of reproach, but one good has flowed from its existence, the preservation of the purity of the tendencies developed in the castes. A child of a higher class, however neglected its education may be, is sure to develop, ordinarily, the characteristics of the class to which it be-

longs. The tendencies of our girls are a great asset and we should not allow them to be destroyed for a little proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Our first concern, therefore, should be to establish institutions which would give our girls the right kind of education. These institutions should be meant for Hindus only and should be conducted exclusively by Hindu teachers. They should be divided into schools and colleges, in the manner of existing institutions for boys and young men.

Education should be imparted through the medium of vernacular and the study of Sanskrit should be compulsory along with that of religion and music. The rest of the course of studies should include a judicious selection from the course of studies prescribed for our boys, with necessary special subjects for the girls.

It is incumbent on those who are anxious for the proper education of the Hindu girls to make the necessary representation to the Government. There should be persistent Hindu demand for the education of the Hindu girls on Hindu lines, and those who are in charge of the department should be made to realise that they have a duty to discharge in this respect.

At the same time we would appeal to the people of Hindusthan to move in the matter earnestly. A great step has been taken by the establishment of a Hindu University for our young men at Benares. Cannot similar Universities for girls be started? Unless the future mothers are properly brought up, national improvement continues to remain a far-off event.

THE END

